



James Bonnell Esq.



James Bonnell Esq.

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EXHIBITIONS
OF
THE HEART;
A NOVEL,
IN FOUR VOLUMES.
DEDICATED (BY PERMISSION)
TO
THE QUEEN.
BY
MISS HUTCHINSON.

“ When lo ! a whirlwind from high Heav’n invades
“ The tender plant, and withers all its shades ;
“ It lies, up-rooted from its genial bed,
“ A lovely ruin now, defac’d and dead.”

THE ILIAD.

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EXHIBITION

THE HEART



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EXHIBITIONS

OF

THE HEART.

“ The flow’ry plains and silver streaming floods,
“ By snow disguis’d, in bright confusion lie,
“ And with one dazzling waste fatigue the eye :
“ No gentle-breathing breeze prepares the spring,
“ No birds within the desert region sing ;
“ The ships unmov’d, the boist’rous winds defy,
“ While rattling chariots o’er the ocean fly.”

PHILLIPS.

HAVING satisfied ourselves concerning our friends in England, with whose proceedings we are become perfectly acquainted, and whose avocations now demanded their attentions in different quarters, we will return to the continent, just in time to greet the arrival of our travelling party ; who could not but rejoice to be once again settled in a com-

fortable house, no longer exposed to the chilling blasts of November.

Melcourt's assiduity to ingratiate himself with the ladies, had been unremitting; his engaging manners rendered this, perhaps, no very difficult task: for between themselves they would often dispute which was the distinguished favourite. Maria contended that it was evidently her friend Matilda; while Matilda as playfully lamented, that she dared not believe herself so fortunate:—"On our first acquaintance," said Matilda, "I entertained hopes of success; but now I despair."

"Suppose, ladies," rejoined Mrs. Munster, "I take your beau to myself; his youth is no objection, it being fashionable of late for the lady to bear the honours of seniority. Now all things duly considered, I really think myself the happy woman."

Thus

Thus would these fair combatants dispute for the gay Melcourt's preference, and so charmed were they with his company, that indeed they seldom enjoyed their parties, unless enlivened by his presence ; having always some novelty to impart, or some new scheme in view to beguile the winter evenings. But to Osmond, there was a something in his behaviour and in his sentiments, that indicated duplicity, under the mask of sincerity, he disapproved. Yet the influence this favourite had gained over his relations, who mutually extolled him, debarred Osmond from expressing his secret disapprobation, in compliment to their unanimous opinion ; more especially from being apprehensive of appearing, to their partial eyes, actuated by jealousy. He had also reason to believe that Matilda had made an impression on Melcourt's heart ; and he thought he perceived, with inexpressible concern, that his attentions were not unpleasant to her.

These, with numberless instances which daily transpired to strengthen his aversion to Melcourt, induced him at length to suggest this opinion to his sister, who, less penetrative, chid her brother for traducing the character of their favoured friend even in idea ; adding jocosely, that he “ really grew quite cross and crabbed, and indulged the vagaries of his own splenetic imagination till he fancied them real.”

Mr. Evington, beheld Osmond's partiality daily encrease for Matilda with pleasure, whose mind and virtues had been nurtured by Mrs. Munster in a manner similar to that adopted by Mrs. Evington in forming and completing the excellencies of her own daughters. Hence it was with particular delight that Mr. Evington would plan out the future, and often say to his wife, “ My son has formed an attachment concordant with the vital wish of my heart. The world may think

think him young to settle in life ; that the cares of a family will surround him before his reason can be sufficiently matured for their management ; but those who are led by outward appearances must infallibly misjudge : let them develop my Osmond's character, put his prudence to the test, and prove his understanding ; they will then be compelled to acknowledge, that where the foundation is grounded on a solid basis, it is able to support the most weighty burthen ; besides, I am of opinion, that early marriages with amiable women ensures felicity. Hence I shall not hesitate in giving my consent to my son's union with Matilda."

Mrs. Evington heard these heartfelt effusions of her husband with an assenting smile. That this union should take place, formed one of her prayers to heaven : yet her knowledge of the heart taught her to discern, that Matilda's was still

insensible, to a livelier passion for Osmond than that of genuine friendship. No other sentiment affected her elevated soul. She participated in his joys and his sorrows, and she felt whatever befel him with lively emotions, but they were the emotions of friendship only. Mrs. Evington plainly observ'd this indifference; yet blamed herself for wishing that more than friendship should molest her peace: at other times she hoped Osmond's steady attachment would awaken a stronger feeling in Matilda's bosom, and ripen friendship into love; perfectly convinced, that if it did not before, it never would after marriage.

"We wish to see two friendly troops unite,
That each glad heart, replete with gay delight,
May its sensations chearfully impart,
And send them glowing to its fellow heart."

But she withheld these observations from her husband, whose sanguine wishes in every thing that regarded his family's welfare,

welfare, made him sometimes anticipate too fervently. She silently watched the event, without any appearance of anxiety; but at proper opportunities sought by gentle arguments to prove the uncertainty of our wishes being realized, when their completion depends not on ourselves.

The weather grew now so intensely cold, that the good old Mr. and Mrs. Varennes seldom quitted the inviting fireplace. A very heavy fall of snow covered the ground, accompanied by a severe frost for several days: nevertheless, the brilliancy of the sun, and a clear sharp air, enticed the young people of both sexes and of every rank to partake of the favourite amusement *en traineaux*, or in sledges of various descriptions on the ice. The elegance with which many of these fascinating vehicles are decorated, render the town extremely chearful. Imagine only, eight or ten of these small open

carriages, appropriated for one person, exclusive of the driver, who sits behind, richly ornamented, drawn by the swiftest, and usually the handsomest horses that can be procured; caparisoned with coloured harness, ribbons, and small bells. The cavalier, who is always the driver, holds the reins directly over the lady's head, who occupies the seat, wrapt in furs. On these occasions, owing either to the impatience of the driver, to the ice and snow on the ground, or, perhaps, to the coldness of the atmosphere, the proud courser, if such he chance to be, proceeds with such uncommon velocity, as is not easily conceivable.

Mr. Varennes had one of these traîneaux, built in the form of an eagle, richly ornamented with gold, according to Melcourt's taste, for whose pleasure it had been procured, and who was particularly fond of exhibiting his skill in driving these fleeting cars. He now prayed
for

for a continuation of the frost, that he might frequently have the pleasure of escorting the two elegant females, who were under the same roof with himself and his benefactors. The novelty of the scene somewhat heightened the amusement, which afforded them much pleasure. Indeed Maria and Matilda affirmed that it was the most delightful variation, they had hitherto experienced on their travels ; adding, “ it is to be regretted that when the season permits, they are not introduced in England.”

“ They would be universally liked, no doubt,” replied Mr. Evington, “ particularly so by the ladies, who seldom feel the least apprehension of cold in these traîneaux, when in conversation with the smart champion they allow to govern the reins over their heads. Nay, Maria, why blush? I agree with you, what can I do more.”

“ I really think,” said Mrs. Evington to her husband, “ you take pleasure in raising that blush you notice.”—“ Indeed,” replied Matilda, happy to take her friend’s part, “ Mr. Evington has turned it in a different light to what we meant in praising this amusement ; which was”—“ True,” said Mr. Evington, gaily interrupting her—“ which was---that you like exercise---that taking the air, though on the coldest day, is a great preservation to the health and complexion. I beg pardon, ladies, but we men are apt sometimes to wander into misconceptions of female conversation.”

Maria felt really hurt that she had unguardedly extolled any thing, which could be construed into an instrument of gallantry, affording no advantage but association with the chevalier driver. Osmond, though silent, wished much to vindicate his sister’s cause ; but he felt too powerfully the truth of his father’s observation ;
that

that the company in his opinion was questionless what made the ride desirable. Melcourt interfered, by way of relief to all parties, and observed, " that the weather was then particularly inviting, and, if the ladies had no objection, he begged to have the pleasure of escorting one of them." The late conversation, however, precluded either Maria or Matilda availing themselves of his offer, with their usual vivacity. Mr. Evington, who did not intend this raillery to be of consequence, insisted on the challenge being accepted, jocosely answering them, that " he meant not to undervalue, but enhance the amusement by his remarks." " I think," said old Mr. Varennes, his snuff box in his hand, while his chin reclined on his gold headed-cane, I think, Melcourt, you encroach a little : don't you suppose Mr. Osmond would like to escort one of those ladies as well as yourself, who have had that pleasure, two or three days successively ?

Melcourt felt the reproof, and seemed abashed, recollecting that as a stranger it might be doubly pleasant to him. The forfeiture of their company was certainly of some magnitude, but he knew one of them would remain at home : he therefore stammered out,—“ Oh, sir, to be sure---undoubtedly—I beg Mr. Osmond’s pardon---but---”

“ If,” said Mr. Evington, “ there arises any dilemma which shall be the happy man, I will settle it---heads or tails, gentlemen ? — that’s my way --- heads or tails ?”---Aye ! aye !” cried old Varennes, “ a good thought---well, now then !”

Mr. Evington produced the coin that was to decide the altercation. The young men drew round the circle with eager expectation, as if life depended on the throw---down it falls---it spins a while---now promises heads, then tails---it reels---it turns once more---and heads prove in favour of Osmond and Matilda.---The
 laugh

laugh and joke prevailed ; good humour re-assumed her seat on every countenance, particularly on the happy Osmond's ; for if Matilda was out, he wished to be her guide ; if at home, he pined to be her companion ; in fact, since he perceived that Melcourt paid her an evident preference, and he supposed it acceptable, the state of his mind became cruelly distressed.---Matilda retired immediately to equip herself for the excursion, promising to hasten her toilet, lest *Sol* should provokingly withdraw his cheering smile. The elated Osmond flew to order the vehicle ; but ere that made its appearance, Matilda descended from her dressing room, and, whether premeditated or not, she certainly looked more beautiful, more fascinating, than ever : her cheeks were flushed, with the hurry of dressing ; her soft eyes, shaded with long fringes, were inexpressibly lovely ; her fine auburn hair fell with luxurious ease round her face and shoulders,

ders, and the dimpled smile played on every feature. A pink satin helmet cap, trimmed with sable, a smart spencer lined with the same, and a white gown, with tippet and muff of beautiful sable, rendered her altogether captivating as she came tripping into the parlour, exclaiming, "There, am I not ready before the traineau? I said I should, Mr. Varennes."—"You little bewitching gypsy," replied Mr. Evington, "there is more wickedness in you to-day, than people would believe possible."—"On my soul," cried old Varennes, "Madam, you will do more mischief along our streets, than you have power to redress."—"Why, sir, what is the matter?" rejoined the blushing Matilda, conscious her appearance gave rise to the accusation:—"indeed—I—I"—"Indeed! Madam," whispered Melcourt, snatching her hand, "you are an angel!"—"Oh, here is Osmond!" cried Matilda, with much pleasure on being extricated from
her

her dilemma.—“ Charming Miss Evans!” exclaimed Osmond, who could not help observing the smile she met him with, “ how kind is this !”—and precipitately hastened her to the traineau, after the good people had laid on him many injunctions to be careful, not to go too fast and various others, all of which Osmond assured them were unnecessary, as he valued the prize too highly, to imprudently run into any danger. Melcour saw them depart with pain, and could not forbear giving a sigh, wishing it were possible that the wind could bear it to Matilda, and imprint it on her heart.

The weather continued pleasant.—Equally delighted with their ride, they thought, with reluctance, on returning. Osmond, happy to find Matilda as unwilling as himself, obtained her permission to prolong the ride on the canal, where great numbers were skating. She consented with pleasure, and was entertaining

taining herself with the dexterity of the skaiters, and making observations on the motly group that were there assembled; when driving swiftly by the edge of the canal, the ice gave way, and the horse plunged into the flood. Osmond, although extremely terrified, had the presence of mind to spring from his seat, and catch Matilda from the sledge, which the affrighted animal, gasping for breath, was tearing after him. However greatly alarmed, Matilda feigned a degree of composure she felt not the moment her foot touched the bank, even to the contradiction of her never-erring countenance, which seemed bereft of life's blood.

Osmond then called loudly for assistance; but the skaiters, with the velocity of the wind, had, long ere the accident took place, reached the other end of the canal; and either did not hear him, or his exclamations were lost among the
 whooping

whooping and halloing of the boys, which usually frequent those places. The skaiters continued their course, some with indifference, some singing, others laughing and talking, while the distracted Osmond stood imploring for succour. After placing Matilda on an adjacent bank, he resolved, even at the risque of his own life, to use every effort to extricate the poor half-drowned animal; even against the earnest intreaties of Matilda, not to expose himself to such imminent danger for the horse, which, however excellent or valuable, was comparatively of no estimation with his own life. Osmond begged her to tranquilize her fears, by assuring her that he would not trespass on the limits of discretion; but the horse appertaining to another, and being the great favourite of his master (Melcourt), Osmond considered himself as bound to use every endeavour, and, at whatever peril, to restore the animal alive to his owner.

With

With this intention, he leaped forward to catch the struggling horse's bridle, when his foot slipped, and an immense flake of ice dashed against his knee, which cut it seemingly in a dangerous manner. Having got the reins in hand, regardless of his own situation, he determined not to loose them until some assistance arrived, which, by this time, was offered from various quarters. Matilda's piercing screams, added to the danger of the scene, terrifying the already affrighted animal—which was at length dragged out. Assistance, respecting his wound, was also instantly offered, which Osmond declined, observing, " that the wound was of no immediate consequence ;" and simply tied an handkerchief round his knee. He then requested a labouring man to hasten to Mr. Varennes, and acquaint him, gently as possible, with the misfortune, and particularly not to mention of his having sustained any injury. Meanwhile he positively objected to Matilda's

tilda's remaining on the cold bank of the river, as a cottage was near, to which he conducted her, and instantly gained admission; into which Matilda, whose whole frame began to sink under the fright, and to suffer by the intense coldness of the weather, gladly entered.—The cottagers gave them an hearty welcome; insisted on the young lady taking a glass of *persico*, or peach-water, which she accepted more from inability to refuse, than from persuasion of its doing her good; this, however, with a chearful fire, shortly restored her feelings. The honest cottagers, willing to shew their respect, kindled another blaze upon the hearth in the best parlour; Matilda and Osmond were compelled to enter, and wait the departed messenger.

Here Matilda, for the first time, observed, with great concern, that the blood had penetrated through the handkerchief round Osmond's knee, and in-

fisted

sifted on her own being steeped in brandy, and added to the one already there.

“ Lovely Matilda, is it possible you can feel such distress for a person who is indifferent to you ? ” “ Indeed, Osmond,” replied Matilda, “ I should deem myself guilty of the greatest inhumanity, did I not feel more than I can possibly express for the wound you have received, which I fear is worse than you suppose—how unlucky is this accident ! ” — “ Unlucky ! ” exclaimed Osmond,—“ Unlucky ! say you ? Ah ! no, sweet Matilda ! I shall esteem it not only the luckiest, but the happiest event of my life, since it has excited a degree of pity and compassion in Matilda’s bosom. Happy, indeed, that what the loveliest of women regards as a misfortune, should thus give comfort to my agonized heart, or is this felicity a dream ? Say, dear Matilda, say I am not indifferent to you ? ”

“ For

“ For heaven’s sake, put this handkerchief round your knee—see how it is swelled !” said Matilda, in great agitation.

“ Ah ! is it thus you evade my question ?—Oh ! Matilda !

“ Positively, Mr. Osmond, I will have you do something to this wound—see how it bleeds !”

Upon which she rose to fetch some brandy, with which she was immediately supplied by the good people ; and after dipping her cambrick handkerchief in the liquid, tied it tight round the knee, which was, in reality, much cut, and the leg so considerably swelled, that he began to fear it would be out of his power to escort Matilda home. Osmond, concluding that Melcourt, on receiving the news, would fly immediately to offer his assistance, did not impart this apprehension, lest Matilda should imagine the wound worse than it really was.

Three

Three hours elapsed—no answer—no horse—nothing arrived, though the residence of Mr. Varennes was not more than four miles from the cottage. Matilda grew very uneasy at the delay. She considered that every moment added to the pain and the danger of Osmond's wound ; and though he forbore to complain, she could not but observe the menacing progress of the swelling, which made her apprehend the most fatal consequences. She participated also in the painful anxiety which their absence would occasion her father : and the unpleasant appearance of being alone with a young man, in a poor cottage, added something to her uneasiness.

“ Your anxiety, my dearest Matilda, adds poignantly to my distress : surely I can never forgive myself for having exposed you to such danger. The skaters were passing us with such velocity, that to avoid a lesser danger, I imprudently
rushed

rushed headlong into the most imminent. Indeed I am unpardonable !”

“ The fright,” rejoined Matilda, “ is immaterial, provided a surgeon could be had to administer some relief to your leg. Suppose we enquire after our fellow sufferer, poor *Marechal* ? The traineau, I perceive, is little damaged.”—The cottagers being interrogated respecting their quadruped invalid, assured them he was doing finely, since they had given him some warm gin and milk, a good rubbing down, and a little rest ; that his knees were only slightly injured, yet they thought he would be too unruly to be put to the traineau.

Osmond rose to examine the condition of the horse ; but, to his mortification, he found himself unable to stand without the assistance of a prop ; this was procured from the aged grand-father, who, but a few minutes before, was lamenting his inability to offer any assistance, but
who

who now, perhaps for the first time, rejoiced he had a crutch to offer. With this wooden friend our wounded hero sallied forth. The young labourer brought out poor Marechal: the fiery animal suffered himself to be led gently, until he approached an heap of white snow; when, snorting and rearing, he proved that he yet felt the effects of his fright.

“ You see, your honour, it will never do to put him in harness yet,” said the youth. “ Certainly it will not,” rejoined Osmond: “ this is indeed unlucky; the more so as our messenger tarries beyond my expectation.” “ Odds-nooks, I have it! I have it, your honour!” —cried the same youth, leading an aged mare:—“ this is old *Steady-sides*; she will carry you safe, I’ll answer for her; if your honour will condescend to let me tackle her to our old sledge; she’s a good servant, your honour—give’s a kiss, *Bel-lotte*,” continued the rustic, patting the
animal,

animal, who seemed conscious of her praise, and obeyed her master, snuffing and smelling about with the gentleness of a pet lamb; while the high-trained courser stood neighing and pawing the ground, in visible trepidation.

The ancient dame of this hospitable cottage came forward, leading Matilda towards the group:—"Osmond, I am come to propose that we should return in these good people's sledge," said miss Evans, who had previously consulted the old woman, and accepted the proposal:—"This young man will drive you, while I accompany you both on foot.

"Agreed," cried Osmond, "on condition that I am permitted to retrieve my credit; while one leg remains it *must* be employed in your service."

"Then," resumed Matilda, "we *must* decline the offer; for no inducement whatever should make me consent to such an extravagance: I am resolute, there-

fore, provided you are the same, I *must* leave you, and shall walk home alone; for on foot I will certainly return.”—Osmond found it in vain to contend the point, and yielded to her better judgment.

During this altercation, the young labourer harnessed and bridled the old mare, and stood waiting at the cottage door for the two disputants. Osmond returned the crutch to its venerable owner, on whose knee sat a pretty curly-headed boy. Osmond deposited his grateful recompense in the child's lap, while, with unnumbered thanks, he expressed his obligation to the aged grandfire.---
 “Farewel, sir,” said the man, “and may you never have occasion for such an assistant; or have the will to relieve without the power to give: a good master is a great blessing, and God recompenses the faithful servant with health and longevity. But you must draw on a pair

pair of my flannel hose, sir; so should madam, or she'll never get to Bruges."--- The kind offer was accepted on both sides; and leaving Mr. Melcourt's horse to the special care of the cottagers, they now slowly proceeded homewards; interrupted only by Matilda's frequent enquiries after the wounded knee.---Never were four miles so tedious in her opinion, yet never, perhaps, had she paced four miles with more alacrity; although she often complained of the tardy progress of her fellow travellers.

CHAP. II.

“ Combien le cœur de l'homme est soumis à l'erreur ! ”

VOLTAIRE.

IN this state they arrived at Mr. Varenne's house, to the joy and astonishment of all parties. Osmond wounded, pale with agony, and half perished with cold ! Matilda fatigued, and on foot ! the large cart-horse, latterly unused to harness, bathed in sweat, with the driver's rusticity, altogether exhibited a most singular appearance. Their surprize and consternation may be more easily imagined than described ; for as no messenger had prepared them for the event, they attributed to choice the delay occasioned by the accident. Matilda now recollected that Osmond had not specified in what street Mr. Varennes lived ; and as there were two of the same name,

who

who resided at a great distance from each other, the delay was accounted for.

After the congratulations on their escape was over, the invalid repaired to his chamber. A surgeon dressed the wound, which, on inspection, proved to be no further dangerous, than that the irritation of pain might create fever.

Several *scraps of paper* were reiterately sent up stairs from the party below, as faithful messengers to enquire after his health; and as many no less grateful responses were on his side abundantly returned. In short, this potent medicine served more effectually to expedite a cure, than the applications of half the doctors in the realm; for while it occupied, it amused his agitated mind. Such was the power of these mute but welcome slaves, that he resolved to adopt them in his service, and ever after introduce *scrap writing* on all occasions.

The preceding night being disturbed by excessive pain, somewhat increased by the unsettled state of his mind, he endeavoured to compose himself by reading his favourite works, those of Rousseau and Voltaire. Their beauties, however, were poisoned by his own despair; the feelings resulting from which he endeavoured to express in the following

STANZAS.

A hopeless passion, source of all my woes,
Destroys my health, my peace, and my repose:
My couch is steep'd with sorrow's briny tears,
And even hope no more this bosom cheers.
The stifled sigh forgets to end its course,
And breathes aloud with undissembled force.
Each night is pass'd in waking agony :—
Come, Death ! relieve this load of misery !
Cease, reason ! cease, oh, cease ! this life to save,
And haste to yield a *timely welcome* grave !

Distracting thought ! that fair MATILDA's charms
Should be resign'd to favour'd MELCOURT's arms !
To MELCOURT !—Never can I calmly view
This lovely treasure e'er bestow'd on you !

On

On you !—a stranger too, so lately known ;
 Shall you ! my rival ! claim her for your own ?
 Whilst I, her friend, and play-mate from her birth,
 Have watch'd the lovely bud expand on earth,
 And know her matchless virtues and her worth !

Shall I ! (when ere our infant bosoms knew
 No wish, but all the world at large might view ;
 When sweet affection placed me by her side,
 As oft she chose me for her youthful guide) :
 Shall I resign her tamely now to one
 I most dislike ; and most of men I shun ?
 No ! sooner let the yawning earth entomb
 This troubled breast, and end my ling'ring doom ;
 Severest tortures let me rather bear,
 Than not partake her joy, her sorrows share !

Though his knee remained swelled,
 and his leg very stiff, Osmond resolved to
 be a parlour guest the next evening.---It
 now became the fashion even before the tea
 equipage was removed, for the company
 to be employed with a pencil and scraps
 of paper, of about three inches deep and
 as many long, cut for the purpose, to
 send round the table ; even the old folks

entered into the spirit of this novelty, and scraps flew backwards and forwards by dozens; conversation ceased, and all intercourse was thus sustained, save now and then an ejaculation of " Mine is the next to be answered"---" Mr. Osmond, or Mr. Melcourt, has received two to my one---fair play---fair play!"---At other times a single word expressed aloud, merely to learn whether it was the intended expression.---It was also an established rule among them that all scraps were *sacred*, and were to be torn on perusal, unless both parties concurred in shewing the contents; consequently, every person wrote their sentiments without the smallest restraint. The gentlemen were seldom seen without a pencil in hand, and every night after the removal of the cloth, the scribbling occupation recommenced with incredible earnestness. The large bowl of punch, that graced the centre of the table, in compliment to the English guests, generally

rally went out filled with these bits of paper torn in atoms.---Mr. Varennes often declared, that Messrs. Hope's famous counting-house at Amsterdam, did not produce as many scraps in a day, as they produced in less than an hour: "And," continued he, "they have no small quantity, I assure you. Having so many clerks of different languages, they are compelled to enforce this method of appealing to one another, by way of preserving order and silence, the banking-house would otherwise resemble the tower of *Babel*."

Osmond heretofore, had never been sufficiently encouraged by Matilda to declare his passion. This new invention opened at once a channel whereby he could communicate his thoughts with freedom. Matilda answered his scraps with sweetness of style exquisitely enchanting: the language of her heart tipt her pen with such peculiar softness,

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that

that often when she meant but common-placed civility, it was expressed with such bewitching phrases, such elegance, that they touched the soul, before you were aware of the danger. The most trivial thought was wrapped in an allegory, blended with a metaphor, or veiled in a simile. Every body regretted the obligation they were under of destroying her scraps. Judge, then, if this fascinating employment, was not calculated to raise Osmond's admiration to the highest pitch? He felt it forcibly, and could no longer conceal it from her; every scrap now breathed the ardour and the permanency of his affection, while she as carefully evaded giving any decisive answer; willing to avail herself of solitude and leisure, to consult her own heart, before she trusted to paper, what she foresaw would carry with it a decision of the most material import to Osmond and to herself. Accustomed from her infancy to look on him with a sisterly regard, habituated

temper, with the best heart, after he became a married man, and found the slightest indifference in his wife, however strictly virtuous, however attentive and amiable she might be, would imagine there was still something wanting to his happiness; under this persuasion, he would, perhaps, become jealous, and render both their lives miserable. Sensible of this, were I not perfectly assured, from your's and the Evington's good sense, that your promises, neither to recommend nor to traduce Osmond in her opinion, are sacred, I would take my daughter entirely from this society. She shall be her own mistress in this respect, uncontrouled by power or advice, as the company she frequents will never admit of her making an ignoble choice, even were she inattentive to the admonitions of her own good sense. Among that number, she shall have free liberty to please herself. She is rich enough; consequently money will have no influence with her. I trust
 she

she is happy, therefore her own home is pleasant : another inhibition I impose on myself, which is to avoid passing my judgment on any man before her ; nor have you ever heard me speak of Osmond in other terms, than those which unbiaſſed truth justified.”

Such was the language Mr. Evans held, when he ſpoke of his daughter's ſettling in life. Under theſe circumſtances, Matilda found herſelf hitherto ignorant of the ſtate of her own heart ; which heart ſhe had never further queſtioned, than was requiſite, before her departure from England, in giving the negative to many offers of marriage, made by thoſe for whom ſhe entertained no predilection ; on which occaſions, indeed, ſhe could ſcarcely be ſaid to conſult a heart that was alike indifferent to all theſe ſuitors.

But now a warm appeal was made to
that

that heart, by a person she highly esteemed; by a young man at once amiable, elegant, and handsome; by one whose affection she had reason to believe was not the transient product of caprice, but founded on pure motives, strengthened by the sweet association of many years, and founded on the earliest esteem. She knew also that nothing could impede an union with Osmond, save her own inclinations. His temper, his family, his fortune, were too well known to her, to excite a doubt. The few impassioned sentences he made use of in the cottage, which then surprized her, were now accounted for. His pleasure, his melancholy, so often visible, his eagerness on all occasions to render himself agreeable to her, his unfeigned dislike to Melcourt, were now explained. A thousand convincing proofs of his love assailed her recollection: she now looked back with astonishment, and, with some degree of shame, accused herself for that want of discernment,

discernment, which had suffered her to receive his peculiar attentions, without attributing them to the real cause.—“ What slender penetration must I possess,” said she, on re-perusing one of Osmond’s scraps, full of import, and which *almost* justified her sily concealing it, the better to weigh its contents,—“ how ignorant must I have appeared !—and what blame do I take on myself for my unguarded conduct !—Am I not amenable for having encouraged his passion ?—Oh, yes !—when he has repeatedly asked my friendship, have I not told him I preferred him to all the world ?—inconsiderate girl !—I loved him, indeed, as my brother and my friend ; while, from this conduct, he must have imagined I cherished him as my lover !—Why did my friends not chide my forwardness ?—They must have observed it—why did they not prevent my falling so low, in his and their opinion, as I must have done ? When they learn that I looked no farther than
the

the present moment, they will never believe that the innocence of my heart veiled my prudence : they will think me a flirt—a coquette—upbraid me for having ensnared their son's affections by apparent encouragement, and they will despise me.—My vindication will be thought artful ; my words considered light as my precedent behaviour : all this have I brought on myself, from my own carelessness !—where shall I turn ? what shall I do ? how shall I act ? let me again consult my simple, *simple* heart—yet *that* has so long deceived me, that I scarcely dare abide by its dictates.”

She then re-perused the scrap she held, replete with the most tender as well as the most respectful professions of unalterable love ; penned in a language that almost forbade a negative to the supplications it contained.—“ This scrap,” continued Matilda, “ requires a decisive answer.—Have I seen a person whose sentiments

timents are more congenial to my own ; who would render me happier than Osmond, or one whom I should prefer for my husband ? My heart decisively tells me, no—ah ! no !”—As she sighed out these last words entered Maria Evington, who expressed her surprise to find her friend not yet undressed, and came merely to light her own wax-taper, which had accidentally fallen.

“ May I not put the same question to you ?” replied Matilda, agitated.—“ Doubtless !” returned Maria, “ and it is answered when I tell you that I have been writing to my sister. But whence arises this unusual perturbation ? Are you ill ?—Matilda, speak ! What means that tear ?—has any thing alarmed you ?—relieve my suspense---I am sure, Matilda, you are indisposed ; I am certain you are ill.”—Matilda took her hand, and pointed to a chair, but her full heart refused for

for some time to relieve itself by the salutary aid of an open confidence :

———“ And now again

Grief swelled her heart, and tears ran down her
check.”

HURDIS.

A succession of thoughts crowded so rapidly on each other, that she felt herself incapable at the moment to return an answer. At length she spoke ---
“ When Maria learns my folly, when she is informed that I have rendered her brother miserable, will she not hate me ? Oh ! some guardian angel of rectitude, guide me ! Can I heap affliction on a whole family by giving my friend---friend from the hour I could lisp his name---to drink the bitter cup of repentance ? O ! never ! never !”

These last words she uttered in a paroxysm of contending passions, accompanied by a flood of tears. Maria, surprised at her manner, and still more to see her
weep,

weep, pressed urgently to be acquainted with their cause; though she secretly concluded it to be a combat of affection for Melcourt and her brother. Maria silently admired Melcourt above the generality of young men; however, she resolved to let fall no word to Matilda, that could tend to make this partiality known, strongly persuaded that he signified her friend. Thus circumstanced, her proud heart disdained to confess its weakness; its fetters were forged; but she had determined, with peculiar heroism, not only to banish his image from her own breast, but to become his advocate with her fair friend.—Matilda sighed; “Maria, my friend!” said she, “you must advise me: I am labouring under the most cruel distress:—that he loves me!”—(Matilda forgetting, in the fullness of her heart, to mention *who* it was that loved her)—“that he loves me,” continued she, “I plainly perceive; that his affection is honourable and sincere,

cere, is beyond all doubt—yet, Maria! be not a partial judge—I know he is dear to you, and to us all.”—Maria blushed deeply, convinced she alluded to Melcourt, and felt abashed that a second person in the world had observed, what she would have hidden even from herself; while poor Matilda attributed the glowing vermillion on her countenance, to an indignation for what she anticipated was coming; her whole frame trembled, and the words again faltered on her lips—Maria paused a moment; then refusing tolerable composure, rejoined, in a tremulous voice—“ Surely there is no occasion for tears, to be beloved by a worthy object; and an amiable one ought not to cause any anguish; but you wrong me, Matilda, in supposing I entertain too high an opinion of his good qualities: I do not, indeed: nevertheless, to my wary judgment, I think he would make you happy; nay, I am sure it would be his constant study: however
 fortunate

fortunate others may think him, you are as much acquainted with his temper, his family, and fortune, as I am ; all of which I am inclined to believe are unexceptionable ; nor do I imagine your good father will refuse to sanction your choice. Indeed I have long seen the havock my dear friend was making with this young man's heart." — This was pronounced with forced gaiety, though foreign to Maria's feelings at that moment.—Her words made a strong impression on Matilda : she thought they carried with them truth, not devoid of reproach. " When," said Matilda, " I asked Maria's advice, it was concerning the interest of my heart, not of my purse, nor of his pedigree ; which I am, perhaps, as you observe, as much acquainted with as yourself ; nor did I suppose *it possible* you were in love with him. This is unkind, Maria, and what I least expected."—Maria, greatly confused, feared she had spoken unguardedly ; yet she
could

could not imagine whence should result the implied impossibility of her loving Melcourt—her heart she considered equally susceptible of personal and mental attractions; why, then, was it impossible for her to receive an impression in Melcourt's favour? This insinuation touched her vanity; a fore place in the female breast, and not invulnerable in either sex:—her countenance became gloomy and fullen, and she replied with quickness, “ whatever *she* might think, she saw nothing impossible in the case.”

Matilda beheld with concern the sudden change of her friend's physiognomy, and ere she left her time to give an answer cried with trepidation, “ Give me your pardon, Maria; I retract my words---forgive me---I spoke harshly and unbecoming myself---Grief, you know, is proud---is it then also fretful towards its best friends? Ah, no! nor am I---for what creates my grief is the apprehension of
giving

giving pain to others---Were I certain it would fall entirely on myself, a few words would decide my present dilemma."

Matilda's sweetness of disposition, ever ready to take blame on herself, sought to dispel the cloud that hung upon her friend's countenance : her attempts were nevertheless fruitless ; for whether Maria had imposed on herself a task too contradictory to her own heart, or whether the little mischievous god of *love* maliciously played her this trick, to exert his sovereignty, and, tyrant like, enjoy his power, cannot now be decided ; but certain it is that Maria's temper was too sensibly ruffled to compose itself.---She pleaded the lateness of the hour, lighted her taper, alleging for excuse that the subject was of a delicate nature ; added to which, she confessed herself not wholly uninterested in it ; that whatever were her sentiments, Matilda would suspect them to be influenced by partiality, which

which of itself rendered her an incompetent judge ; therefore, on reflection, she thought them better suppressed. “ Before to-morrow,” continued Maria, “ I shall have considered more deliberately on my friend’s question, and be then adequate, I hope, to offer my opinion ; meanwhile, suffer your own heart, to guide your superior judgment ; it is a monitor, worthy of you, for its dictates are always noble, its sentiments generous, and every thought pure and chaste as yourself---Good-night, dear Matilda---I it is who ought to implore your pardon and my own ; your’s I doubt not of receiving ---mine ! never ! never !---Adieu ! a thousand blessings attend you---Do not follow me---Good-night !”

She then precipitately withdrew, overwhelmed by the most painful sensations a noble mind can experience when it is suffered to be hurried from its accustomed serenity, when the subvention of its
benign

faculties were confidentially and affectionately required. Maria, in the first instance, nobly resolved to divest herself of the illusive hope she entertained, and yield it, subdued, to her supposed rival. While she believed her preference unobserved, she fancied the task less difficult than it was; but so soon as Matilda innocently referred to the affection she bore her brother, Maria supposed her secret to be known; her best intentions instantly subsided, and the self-imposed task became impracticable.---On entering her apartment, she threw herself upon a chair, and yielded to the conflict of her soul, undecided whether to return to Matilda, and confess the contrition she felt, or wait till her spirits were more composed. "She will," thought Maria, "believe me childish and inconsistent; yet it were better to be thought simple than ungenerous."---In this unsettled state she remained till the clock struck two, and warned her Matilda might be in bed:

this was a natural and warrantable supposition. But in Matilda's situation, no less than in Maria's, the aid of sleep was solicited in vain.

"Tir'd Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep!
He, like the world, his ready visit pays
Where *Fortune* smiles; the *wretched* he forsakes;
Swift on his downy pinions flies from woe,
And lights on lids unsullied with a tear!"

YOUNG.

Miss Evington's sudden departure, her words, her disordered air on leaving the room, were all unfathomable mysteries to Matilda: in vain she ruminated, in vain she strove to find the cause; for her imagination was too much engrossed by Osmond, to give Melcourt even a passing thought, further than the comparison of the two for her husband. Finding all her penetration insufficient, she, for the present, renounced the inquiry, and referred to Osmond's scrap; contrasting his amiable qualities with his imperfections, as she imagined, with scrutinous discernment;

ment ; till at length the former so eminently overbalanced the latter, that she felt herself decided, and framed an answer to his scrap, premised by ejaculating aloud, “ will not Osmond make me happy ?---what more than happiness can I desire ?---were we separated, I should find him, most probably, essential to my peace---our continual amity, I doubt, has undervalued his worth in my opinion ; for it is said, we only truly estimate our friends in their absence.”

Having composed the scrap to her satisfaction, added to the certainty of giving pleasure, her mind felt relieved, and her spirits tranquilized.---She began, for the first time, to think on Osmond as her declared lover, and her future husband. The thought had nothing repugnant in it. The ceremony that would render them man and wife, was, indeed, irrevocable ; but it would not, she persuaded herself, either lessen or encrease her attachment

towards Osmond: as to those exquisite feelings, those inflamed passions, which she read and heard of, she supposed they were foreign to her nature, or were meliorated by a continual and amicable intercourse, subsiding in that calm affection which would strengthen with their years, and prove the firm and immoveable basis of permanent felicity. Her mind, thus quieted by self-approbation, towards four in the morning she laid her head on the now welcome pillow, to enjoy that unmolested and refreshing repose, which it is the peculiar prerogative of innocence to know and to enjoy.

CHAP. III.

“ C’est le cœur seul, qui peut rendre tranquille
Le cœur *fait tout* ! le reste est inutile.”

LA FONTAINE.

THE next morning, when the young folks assembled at breakfast, they anxiously sought to read in each other’s countenance what passed in their mind, being in some measure collaterally affected.—Osmond, who had committed the thread of his fate to the hands of Matilda, tremblingly waited the approach of day.—Maria’s heavy eyes proclaimed the sleepless night she had passed, while self-convicting and abashed, they seemed to avoid encountering those of Matilda, who, though bereft of many hours’ repose, had lost none of her wonted bloom.—Osmond hastened to meet her, and, taking her hand, greeted her

entrance as usual, with many enquiries. At this instant she felt her colour change, and her faltering steps denoted her agitation. The recollection, that in a few hours she would voluntarily consign the happiness of her life to his hands, glided across her mind. Her tremor was, however, soon dispelled, by the kind solicitations and affectionate attentions of Osmond.

This sudden emotion escaped not his penetration: he observed the change with a pang that chilled him to the soul, but from its being transitory and altogether unperceived by any other person, he avoided noticing it. Matilda recompenced this forbearance with a smile of ineffable sweetness; and addressed the company with her accustomed urbanity, spreading around her good humour and cheerfulness.

During the breakfast hour, Mr. Evington

ton intimated his intention of proceeding towards Holland in the course of the week. "I am in hourly expectation," said Mr. Varennes, "of two friends, whom I wish to introduce to your family: they are just arrived at Ostend, and write me that they purpose staying ten days or a fortnight here; you must, therefore, promise me, to defer your route—I take no denial."

Mrs. Evington thought she observed in her daughter's pale countenance, something to prey upon her mind. The tender mother suspected the cause, but unwilling to judge precipitately, waited further proof before she suffered suspicion only to decide her actions. The two evident changes that successively pervaded Maria's features, when her father spoke of departing, and when Mr. Varennes hospitably averted the proposal, fully convinced Mrs. Evington, that the sooner they left Bruges the better: con-

frequently she enjoined earnestly the necessity of declining the kind offer of Mr. and Mrs. Varennes ; but they would not listen to a refusal ; and Mr. Evington found himself compelled to accede to their pressing solicitation.

A little scrap from Matilda, informed Mrs. Munster that she wished to converse with her in private ; a summons which Mrs. Munster cheerfully obeyed. An hour before dinner was the appointed time, when the rest of the family would be occupied in the business of the toilet. —Matilda then imparted to Mrs. Munster Osmond's declaration, saying in what manner she intended to answer his scrap.

“ How many sleepless nights, my dearest girl,” rejoined Mrs. Munster, “ have you caused me on this subject !---How often have I wished to learn your secret thoughts respecting Osmond !---Yet the impartiality that has hitherto marked
your

your conduct, always induced me to believe him perfectly indifferent to you. Tell me, Matilda, is he the man of your choice?"--"Take this," answered Matilda, "you will there read my sentiments; they are the result of mature reflection, and if they meet with your concurrence, I purpose giving the scrap to Osmond."

After Mrs. Munster had attentively read Matilda's scrap, she replied; "And is not my young friend hasty?--is she certain that Osmond will always reign paramount in her young heart?--Recollect, Matilda, the affliction it would cause your own excellent father, as well as Mr. Evington, were you not both happy."

"Under this idea, my dear madam, I venture to answer for my own heart. I cannot be ignorant of that which you allude to: Mr. Melcourt is doubtless pos-

essed of many amiable qualities, as are several other gentlemen who have honoured me with their partiality. But none, in my opinion, equal Osmond Evington. I, therefore, think myself justifiable in saying what I have written."

Mrs. Munster entertained a high opinion of young Melcourt, and scarcely knew in whose favour her own wishes preponderated, as to an union with her beloved charge. Osmond's character, his family, and fortune, were better known to her than were Melcourt's: on the other hand, Melcourt seemed to have none of that impetuosity of temper, that marked his rival's disposition; and as to fortune, in all human probability he would inherit that of Mr. Varennes, who indeed, had often signified as much.--- The faithful promise, however, which she had made to Mr. Evans, not to influence the opinion of Matilda, induced her to say no more, than that " she approved

proved of the answer, provided Matilda really felt the sentiments she expressed."

Sanctioned by Mrs. Munster's approbation, Matilda delayed not a moment to relieve that suspense,

"The restless tenant of an aching breast,"

which, to a mind like Osmond's, becomes intolerable. She repaired to the breakfast room, but not finding him, she fancied she heard his steps in passing the dining-parlour: here she found him; his hands in his pocket, his eyes fixed on the ground, pacing the room, embosomed in thought. His back being turned, as she gently entered, and trusting that he would perceive the paper on the carpet, she threw it down, and instantly closed the door after her. A few moments previous to the dinner hour, Osmond and Melcourt entered the drawing-room.

---Matilda had reason to believe that

Osmond's doubts were now all satisfactorily removed. The blush of self-approbation illumined her whole countenance; anticipating the acknowledgements she expected from Osmond for *the scrap*, she felt herself already confused; and when first accosted by Melcourt, she appeared evidently embarrassed, wished him "good evening," in lieu of "good morning;" said the weather was "very fine," although the rain was pouring. Melcourt and Mr. Varennes laughed heartily, at these mistakes. Osmond attributed her absence of mind to very different motives, and the crimson that painted her cheeks to Melcourt's welcome appearance.—His soul fired with jealousy.—Wrapt in sorrow and suspense, he had trod and re-trod over the paper, containing the *fiat* of his happiness, without noticing it.

Matilda observed, with surprize, the gloom that hung upon his brow; for
aware

aware of his usual energy in happiness as in sorrow, she expected to have had some difficulty to allay the transport, she supposed her scrap would have occasioned.—Mrs. Munster, equally astonished, concluded he had not received it.

During the dinner, captain Osnaburgh and Mr. Hamilton were announced. Mr. Varennes welcomed their arrival with heartfelt pleasure. They were both in the sea service: the first seemed about three or four and thirty, and the other much younger. Their appearance bore the semblance of men of fashion, and their persons were strikingly pleasing. Captain Osnaburgh's features were regular, his stature tall and graceful, and he might be, critically speaking, reckoned the handsomest man of the two.—Mr. Hamilton's figure was of the middling size, elegant and interesting; his countenance expressive, soft, and alluring.—
 “ Suffer me, ladies and gentlemen, to
 have

have the pleasure of introducing captain Osnaburgh," said Mr. Varennes, " my particular friend, and lieutenant Hamilton."---The bow and curtsy went round, with many apologies from the strangers, for disturbing the dinner table.

" You were not accustomed, sir," said captain Osnaburgh, " to dine so late, or my memory has played me truant ; but we sailors, cruising upon the turbulent ocean, are apt to be forgetful of what passes on shore, till at length we become as rough as the element we plough."---
 " Whatever you may please to allege to the contrary," returned Mr. Varennes, " confess, my worthy friend, that you would be devilishly hurt were other people to be of the like opinion."

" 'Pon my soul I mean what I say," replied the captain---" I believe Mr. Hamilton will not scruple to second me."---

" Why, in truth," replied his friend,

" the

"the loss we sustain, in our society being composed of one sex only, is sufficient to account for our unpolished nature."

"This makes you prefer the company of the other sex the more on shore," rejoined Mrs Varennes; "most men are indifferent to that which is easily obtained, and only prize what is beyond their reach; thus perhaps what you regret is one of our greatest advantages."

"It would be a difficult task for me to think so, madam," exclaimed captain Osnaburgh, "especially when I look round this table."—"I swear, Osnaburgh," said Melcourt, "you are grown quite gallant, since I saw you last," observing whether Matilda's eyes were fixed on the strangers—"you are fishing for compliments, I protest," continued Melcourt, who, with all the vivacity of one who laughs at the past and thinks only on the present moment, entertained the company

company with a thousand fallies of wit and humour ; while poor Osmond, with a sickened heart, felt disgusted to observe how soon a few unmeaning words, that spring neither from the heart nor the head, but are the common vocabulary of gallantry which every man, with tolerable animal spirits, repeats like a parrot, fascinated female attention. He could not in this follow Melcourt's example ; for his lips were the faithful interpreters of his heart, and obedient only to its dictates.

To witness any longer the progress he believed Melcourt made in Matilda's affection became too painful for his philosophy to withstand ; and he secretly resolved, that unless she answered his scrap that night, he would return to England, there buy a commission in the army, and, in the tumult of war, seek to banish her image from his mind. The natural warmth of his disposition, sometimes led his better judgement astray ; and with
him

him it was an invariable rule, not only to say a thing, whether to himself or any other person, but, if possible, to put his words in execution. The remainder of the evening glided away quicker than could have been expected, considering that many in the circle were constrained to appear chearful, in compliment to the two strangers whose pleasantry of conversation equalled the elegance of their persons.

Matilda, for some time, felt herself piqued at Osmond's extraordinary coolness; her spirits were depressed: the oftener she recapitulated the contents of her scrap, the more she felt offended, and could not avoid silently observing, "such is man! never contented!—what more could I write? Ungrateful Osmond!—perhaps my gravity---arising, alas! from his extraordinary behaviour---may induce him to imagine that I repent of my words."—Persuading herself that this
probably

probably had given him uneasiness, she assumed a lively air, and appeared in good spirits. Sometimes she was prompted to investigate the cause of his melancholy; but a little self-pride—often woman's best friend, sometimes her worst enemy, and if too much indulged, her certain ruin—suggested that it was unnecessary.---When they separated for the night, he took an opportunity to whisper as she quitted the room, " Good-night! unkind, adored Matilda!---this is the last time you may ever see me: farewell, lovely woman! though I must always envy the man of your choice, may Matilda be blest!"

Matilda could scarcely sustain herself: nor was she able to make any reply, but hastily reached her room, to reflect alone, and to develope, if possible, the meaning of this wonderful salutation.--- She had noticed that Maria had been pensive and unwell all day, and she wished not
to

to disturb her repose, more especially as it was already past two in the morning. ---Matilda also imagined, that after the conversation of the preceding night, with which she thought it probable Osmond had been made acquainted; and that he had informed his sister of the receipt of her scrap; a circumstance which Matilda had been prevented communicating to Maria by variety of impediments, and want of opportunity. Suggestions like these filled her with those distresses, which a less delicate mind would have totally escaped.

CHAP. IV.

"Beauteous are the dews of morning,
 When they bathe the lovely flow'r;
 Are the lucid drops of *feeling*,
 When from *fondness* falls the show'r."

PRATT.

THE party had separated late, and Maria's spirits were already much exhausted, she, therefore, gladly sought her apartment, where, however, she was soon disturbed by a gentle rap at her chamber door. Concluding it to be Matilda, she desired her to come in; somewhat surprized she used the formality of knocking. Scarce had the reflection died away, ere Osmond entered.

"You wonder, no doubt, to see me at this late hour: but I have something of moment to impart."---His agitated
 air

air struck Maria with many apprehensions--She was no stranger to his passion for Matilda; nor to his intention of divulging it to her; and, from a misapprehension, she concluded that Matilda had given him a negative in favour of Melcourt.

“ Be seated, Osmond, what ails you ? ”

“ The worst of evils, the most insupportable ! I am wretched---I leave Bruges to morrow morning ”

“ Leave us ! my brother ; are you mad !
---What do you mean ? ”

“ No, Maria, I am determined, and nothing on earth shall alter my intentions. ---To-morrow I am resolved to quit Bruges---I have already offended Matilda---curst fool that I am ! She disdains even giving me an answer---She despises me---I intend to purchase a commission, and seek in---”

“ Osmond ! my dear brother ! what mean you ?---hear me !---for heaven’s
fake,

fake, do not be guilty of any imprudence! -Are you certain Matilda has weighed your question?"

"*Too certain*, Maria; I need no further proof: nay, I appeal to yourself to say on your honour, whether you do not think Melcourt's suit favoured?"

Maria could not contradict, yet she dreaded to affirm his doubts---" Sometimes," replied she, " I am inclined to think with yourself: at others, indeed generally, her behaviour widely contradicts this belief.--I know not how to decide, much less how to advise you."

" Maria! you *do* know---but you are unwilling to speak the truth---I feel your goodness; it is grateful to my heart, however I may blame your insincerity. I am prepared---I am resigned---since it is the will of heaven that my most ardent prayer shall be rejected, I will yet prove that her happiness is my sole ambition, by leaving her to the full direction

tion of her own heart---If Melcourt is
--oh God ! my soul recoils at the
thought!" --

" Hush, Osmond ! be not unjust---Melcourt never intentionally gave you pain. Is he not as likely as yourself to be enamoured of Matilda, and possibly as much incensed against you, as you are with him ?"

" If that were the case, Maria, he would not tamely submit to half what he has done to my own knowledge---No, Maria, your brother may be miserable, but he shall never be found unjust---If Melcourt be the man you believe him," continued Osmond, " then say your brother is destitute of penetration. Nevertheless, such is my idea of *justice*, that I am averse to persuade, or being persuaded : we are born to judge for ourselves ; for this purpose was our reason given us : I deem it an indisputable conviction of a weak mind and of a mean spirit, to be guided by every intruder's opinion---I
should

should despise myself, were I to remain here to be laughed at by Melcourt, pitied by my friends, discarded by Matilda."

"I would have you, Osmond, fulfil your wishes,--but deliberately. See my father and mother--advise with them--your sudden disappearance will alarm and distress them exceedingly."

"I expected as much, but I am resolute to my word: I have ordered the chaise at eight in the morning, and go I will.--Before I depart, I charge you, dear sister, as you love me, to tell Matilda, that I would not wound her feelings a second time by addressing her in writing--that her silent answer to my last scrap convinces me I have no hope of ever possessing that place in her affection, I dared aspire to--that whatever may be her predilections, my most affectionate wishes will ever attend her--and that when the unfortunate name of Osmond crosses her memory, may it recal to her mind those
happy

happy scenes of peaceful childhood we spent together in Devonshire: should it bring a thought less pleasant, let it be erased by some other name dearer to her heart!"

Having pronounced these words, he laid his head upon the table, as if ashamed of the agony he suffered. The tear trembled in his eye; it seemed too proud to fall and too big to stand.—Maria in silence wept abundantly: the great error she laboured under precluded her offering that consolation she knew the only one that could be acceptable, to her brother; and her feelings were too strong to be expressed---“ She looked and sighed and sighed again.”

“ This anguish, Maria, is perhaps unworthy of your brother: yet when my mind recalls the numberless hours of hope and fear that have so long racked this bosom with tortures inconceivable, those delusive dreams of golden pleasure

sure I have indulged by her side, when creative fancy looked to futurity with a rapture not to be described, it quite unmans me ; and I become the victim of despair.---Where shall I find another Matilda ?---Where shall I find such matchless charms, such an enlightened mind, so many virtues combined in one woman? --Alas, nowhere !---Oh ! never ! never ---Oh ! Matilda ! dear excellence !---Unkind Matilda !”---Again he struck his forehead---the pulses beat fast, but no hand could arrest their tumult, and he burst into a flood of tears.

“ Thus self-deceived-----

Still far from truth, still wanders in the maze
Of doubts and fears, while in his breast he tries
To feed that hope his better sense denies.
So the poor bird that from his fields of air
Lights in the fraudulent gin, or vicious snare,
The more he flutters, and the subtle wiles
Attempts to 'scape, the faster makes the toils.”

“ I shall write my father a few lines ;
an interview would be too painful on
both

both sides, and is best avoided.---One thing more," continued Osmond, taking the hand of Maria, and addressing her emphatically---" Never let Matilda become acquainted with the pangs I endure for her sake ; her gentle heart, sooner than give pain, would sacrifice its own peace ; and though to be Matilda's husband is the only blessing I asked of heaven, my proud soul would indignantly reject the idea, that compulsion made her mine, or that we were united in any bonds but those of reciprocal affection.--- If my absence grieves her, as from friendship perhaps it may---grief of any kind wants no aggravation---do you, in that case, my dear sister, endeavour to assuage it ; for I can bear any thing, save that Matilda should be unhappy. If Melcourt behaves honourably, a very few days will decide her choice ; if he continues to dangle by her side, and make no offer, write to me, and I will compel him to declare his intention.---On recol-

E 2

lection,

lection, I am half inclined to wait a few days longer."

"Maria, greatly distressed at her brother's situation, intreated him not to act precipitately; yet, persuaded that Melcourt had declared himself to Matilda, she scarcely knew what advice to suggest as preferable.—" I must confess," said she, " notwithstanding your prejudice respecting Melcourt, I have no doubt but his intentions are honourable, and I cannot see him in the unfavourable light you do."

" Yes, he dare not act otherwise," said Osmond, with contempt; " there are some circumstances, my dear sister, where honour binds us to secrecy, as there are many points in a man's private character, the wisest of your sex cannot penetrate. Melcourt has, doubtless, many pleasing qualities; were those less eminent, I should feel it my duty to divulge those errors which age and experience, with

an amiable wife, may correct : therefore I do not merit Maria's accusation of acting with prejudice towards him : she may rely on my sacred word, that I have behaved in the most honourable manner, by not further exposing him, than by giving my supposition to your private ear, which you know, dear girl, is allowable.—Perhaps I am too scrupulous when I inspect the character of that man I would wish to call brother, or him I would esteem as my friend ; neither of these, I doubt, can Melcourt *ever* be !—He will rejoice to learn my departure—be it so—my soul soars above such littleness.—And now, dearest sister, farewell !—This separation is, indeed, cruel !—Oh ! Maria ! feel for me—but do not add to my sufferings by your tears.”

Maria could restrain her grief no longer. She wept aloud ; for though she imagined Melcourt in a manner engaged to Matilda, her heart refused to banish

him from her memory: every word uttered against him was as a sharp-pointed arrow piercing her bosom: in short, though she knew her brother above dissimulation, she could not believe Melcourt worthless. All these circumstances, and the pain she felt in parting with a brother tenderly beloved, overwhelmed by the acutest sorrow, combined to sink her spirits to the depths of affliction.--- She wept and laughed in the same breath, and seemed for a few minutes insensible to Osmond's fraternal reproofs---" Maria! I implore you, on my knees, cease this anguish---you will awaken the family--- For heaven's sake, my dearest sister, calm your agitation---I will return---Yes, Maria, I shall—I shall be"---He wished to say he should be happy, but the thought of happiness, bereft of Matilda, chilled his blood, and died upon his tongue.---Maria, though speechless, had not lost her senses, and seeing Osmond make a movement to leave the room, she
rose

rose from her chair, and recovering articulation by the exertion, said, with difficulty. "Do not quit me---I am better---quite well."---This was precisely what he wished ; for her silence had alarmed him. ---"Then be not a foolish girl," rejoined Osmond, kissing her pale cheek, as the manly tears trickled down his own ; "let reason strengthen your courage---you ought to inspire me by your example---when duty calls, Maria, we must obey."

The pleasure of seeing her recover, recalled his dejected spirits, and served greatly to renovate the tranquillity of his mind. In consideration to her indisposition, he promised to defer his journey till the day following, on condition that she would immediately retire to rest, and take something to compose herself to sleep.

Having extorted this promise, Osmond

repaired to his own room, where he wrote a few lines to his father, and a short note to his sister, then went to bed, but not to rest ; a disturbed slumber closed his eyes, that rather fatigued than refreshed either his mind or his body. Filled by illusive visions, sometimes he fancied Matilda betrothed to Melcourt, suffering the most poignant distress of penury and want ; at others, he beheld her robed in white in the midst of splendour, yet seeming unhappy, and beckoning to him ; then let fall her glove at his feet, over which he trod and re-trod and left her.—Thus harassed by unquiet dreams, Osmond passed the remainder of the night.—He awoke about six in the morning, under an impression on his imagination, that he was reviewing his regiment, while a full band played in delightful harmony. The music his fancy had converted into a martial band, proceeded from the chiming of the bells, which

which the sleep he partook of permitted to vibrate on his imagination.

The chimes (or *carillons*) at Bruges, are remarkably sweet, and chime every hour a whole tune; at the half hour a moiety; and a few bells at the quarter. He soon discovered his error, and listened with great pleasure to the real cause, being a favourite French romance, peculiarly plaintive, and one that had always delighted him. It became the more interesting at the present juncture. He fancied the words of the air were applicable to his own situation.—Impressed with this idea, he translated them into English, roughly sketched on a piece of paper, addressed to Maria, and left them in his room.

ROMANCE.

Thou mourn'st my days, that deep in gloom appear,

My hapless days, bound in by sorrow's spells:

Ah! cease to mourn a lot to wisdom dear,

And learn that reason with affliction dwells.

By youth's seducing joys, by love enflam'd,
 I blindly worshipp'd the insidious fair ;
 My chains were light, my ready heart was tam'd,
 But when I broke them, I despis'd the snare.

Wholly resign'd to pleasure's madd'ning fires,
 To all the follies of inebriate youth ;
 My soul was sinking to corrupt desires,
 When sorrow woke me to the voice of truth.

Glory and honours vanish'd at their dawn,
 The dazzling hopes of giddy life are fled :
 Delusive dreams ! from which my mind is drawn,
 Swiftly ye flew, and all your charms are dead.

Say, where shall wretchedness her tumults calm ?
 On heavenly sympathy the soul relies :
 Of friendship then we doubly feel the balm,
 When even love from low'ring sorrow flies.

Osmond being informed the chaise waited, without giving himself time to reflect, obeyed the summons, telling the postillion he would largely recompence him, provided he drove expeditiously, and gained Ostend in time for the evening's tide. The boy assured him there
 was

was no occasion to hurry, as he knew the tide to be late, and the wind contrary; that he would do his best to please his honour, but that his horses were only a few hours come off a long journey.—Such intelligence was ill calculated for Osmond's impatience, who began to regret he had not given the preference to riding on horseback.—Again charging the boy to be quick, they set off, *ventre à terre*, smacking and cracking the whip till they quite lost sight of Bruges.

CHAP. V.

Trust me, child,
 There lurks a serpent in this flow'ry path
 Shall sting thee to the quick. HURDIS.

MATILDA gladly beheld the dawn of day open gradually to her longing view, and anxiously listened to hear the grateful sound of the family's stirring. About eight she ventured to leave her room. It had occurred to her that Osmond might have overlooked the scrap. She proceeded directly to the dining-parlour, in order to satisfy herself; but not finding the smallest vestige of the unfortunate slip of paper, she returned assured that he must have found it.—As none of the family had yet assembled, Matilda sat down to a piano-forte. Unharmonious as were her thoughts, entirely engrossed by Osmond's unaccountable

able

able behaviour, she touched the keys in a few pathetic, yet wild, notes, scarcely thinking on what she was playing, and too unsettled to take a music book, till at length she imperceptibly fell into the favourite air, which had that very morning served to soothe and amuse him. Having played it several times over, the words, " You may never see me again," seemed imprinted on the music stand, and gave a pang to her heart, which she tried to relieve by a sigh, succeeded by a few unconscious tears that fell upon the notes, while she still continued to give to the little plaintive air, the utmost pathos. — Her back being towards the door, Melcourt entered, and placed himself behind her unnoticed, till the warmth of his breath reached her cheek—she started—the first wish which sprung from her heart was, that it might be the breath of Osmond; the chagrin she experienced on the disappointment, was not a little aggravated by finding her eyes humid, and

and could not have escaped the penetration of a less interested observer than Melcourt, who, however, affected not to perceive it.

When Miss Evans touches the keys," said he gaily, "I fancy myself listening to the lyre of Orpheus; and when I find my mistake, I wish myself another *Paris*, happy to endure his fate, could I meet with equal acquiescence in her, who has more than the charms of Helena!"

"If we are to speak mythologically," replied Matilda, for a moment abashed, "rather let me aspire to the virtues of Penelope, than the charms of Helena, which can never be recollected without exciting both pity and censure."

"In you, Miss Evans," replied Melcourt, "we see both combined—Helena's beauty with Penelope's virtues— who then dare aspire to be the envied Ulysses?"

"Not him who avowedly professes his
wish

wish to rival the unfortunate Menelaus,"
 ---said Matilda, vexed to be alone with
 Melcourt, whom she began to suspect
 Osmond disliked.---" And then, for his
 audacity," exclaimed Melcourt, " seek
 his sad recompence in the fate of Iphis."

The entrance of Maria terminated a
 conversation, extremely unpleasant to
 Matilda.---Maria finding they had met
 unusually early, concluded it was by
 appointment ; which, corroborating her
 former misconceptions, she now regret-
 ted that she had dissuaded her brother
 from his intended journey, and would
 have instantly withdrawn, partly to con-
 ceal the emotions created by this appa-
 rent assignation, and partly in quest of
 her brother.

Matilda conjured her to remain, say-
 ing, " she took it very unkind in her
 leaving the room so precipitately."---
 Before Osmond quitted the house, he had
 kindly,

kindly, yet peremptorily, enjoined the servants to keep his secret, until the letters were delivered. They were faithful, and nothing had transpired. Maria questioned the maid, whether Mr. Osmond was out ; who replied, " she did not know---but believed not."---This answer satisfied both Maria and Matilda, who imagined that, were he really gone out, the domestics would have known it. The former also knew her brother to be a strict observer of his promises, even in the most trivial concerns ; and they now expected him every moment to descend from his chamber.

Mrs. Munster and Mrs. Varennes having joined the party, Maria took the opportunity of leaving the room in search of Osmond, whose non-appearance began to alarm her. With a palpitating heart she went up stairs, and knocked at his door ; receiving no answer, she entered, and, to her great mortification, only found

found the two letters on the table, and the verses written in pencil, scarcely legible. With a trembling hand she opened that addressed to herself, and read---

“ Half-past three in the morning.

“ My beloved sister, when she receives this, will-accuse me of forfeiting my word; but I hope the inducement that impels me to risque the accusation will, in some measure, exonerate me.---The anguish I beheld you undergo last night, justifies my apprehensions of encountering another interview, which, notwithstanding your resolution, I am sensible would be attended with the same consequences.

“ Give the other letter, my dear Maria, to my father, and tenderly embrace my beloved mother; tell her, she must neither regret my absence, nor blame my precipitation. To tear oneself from a beloved object, and from inevitable danger,

ger, at the expence of our happiness, requires the utmost exertion ; it must be done from the impulse of the moment, or never !—Reason teaches me the necessity of this step, while phrenzy puts it in practice : donot , however, Maria, tell this to my mother ; for her affectionate heart would adduce more evils to this separation than benefits, which I expect are numberless and salutary.—Be my faithful messenger to the amiable Matilda : my heart suggests much ; yet, overwhelmed as it is with grief I will not venture to transcribe its dictates, lest I lead myself in a maze of extatic phantasms, from whence there is no extrication —Acquaint her hereafter—no ! nothing—My brain is becoming frantic.—Adieu, my dearest sister ; rejoice that your brother has resolution to shun the fire, ere he is wrapt in its flames. Beware ! O my sister, beware that your heart forms no ill-requited passion : check it, my love, in the bud ; you are then
its

its mistress—if you neglect this caution, it will become your master.---The gentle wind of innocence refresh you! the genial warmth of chaste affection warm your bosom!--and that the angel of blessedness may direct you and Matilda, is the dearest and most earnest wish of

“ Your affectionate

“ OSMOND.”

“ I am apprehensive of incurring Mr. Evans displeasure; but *time* will justify my conduct, or remove my doubts:---meanwhile, Maria must plead my vindication.”

Maria having read her letter, found herself too unwell to rejoin the breakfast table. She repaired to her room; sent Osmond's letter, with an apology, to her father, stating, that indisposition prevented her attending the breakfast party.

Mrs. Evington immediately attended
Maria;

Maria; while Matilda, in the utmost perturbation, anticipated and waited the purport of Mr. Evington's letter, whose expressive countenance quickly denoted that it contained something distressing and unexpected, which, however, he forbore to signify; only observing "his son would not breakfast with them that morning."---The doubts and fears of Matilda were now realized: she had passed two nights in cruel suspense and great anxiety: her spirits were too much weakened to sustain more: they failed her;---yielding to the impulse of the moment, and imagining the worst, her heart sickened:---rising to quit the room, she fell senseless at Mr. Evington's feet.

The whole house presented a scene of confusion, of consternation, and of grief. Surprise and terror assailed each individual, yet none dared to enquire into the cause. As soon as Matilda was sufficiently

ficiently recovered, Mrs. Munster and Mrs. Varennes conducted the invalid to her apartment, and left the solution of these mysterious events to Mr. Evington, who was now under the necessity of explaining them by reading his son's letter.

“ My dear sir,

“ With heartfelt concern I anticipate the displeasure and possibly the uneasiness these lines will occasion my family, when they apprize you that I am on my journey to England. An affair deeply interesting to my present and future peace of mind, compels me to adopt this expedient.---Perfectly convinced, sir, of your paternal affection, I confide in the wish, I know you must entertain, to see my happiness restored, which will excuse my precipitation in its pursuit, and give me ultimately your sanction for my conduct.

“ I am fully determined to purchase
a com-

a commission ; and my resolution on that subject is formed on the most mature deliberation. Therefore, dear sir, although I shall wait your answer before I completely execute my intentions, suffer me to hope it will be acquiescent ; it being impossible for me to specify the immediate necessity which urges this determination.

“ Meanwhile, dear sir, assure yourself and my tenderly-beloved mother, that your son, ever reluctant to incur your displeasure, laments he is indispensably forced to risque it at present ; that he nevertheless relies on your indulgence, to reinstate him in that affection it would sensibly grieve him to wound, and be considered an irremediable loss to forfeit ; which assurance no event can alter, or ever diminish the respectful affection of their son,

“ OSMOND.”

Mr.

Mr. Varennes attributed this sudden absence to some indiscretion, which, probably, Osmond had committed in Bruges; never suspecting it could arise from any misunderstanding between him and Matilda.---Mr. Evans, on the other hand, felt his choler rising, which seldom required much provocation, though generally more quickly subdued.---Highly as he esteemed Osmond, the unfortunate impetuosity of that young gentleman's temper, meeting with his own, which was equally impetuous, often created high words between them.

"Pray let the young gentleman go," cried Mr. Evans; he must smart for these pranks---What new vagary has he got in his head?---Certainly he is, without exception, the most impetuous, extravagant, hair-brained boy, I know; an incorrigible, good-for-nothing young run-a-gate!"---Mr. Evington's feelings were hurt by the contents of his son's letter,
and

and the more so, as he suspected the real cause. Nevertheless, his paternal affection could not endure the best and dearest friend to surmise a thought to his son's disadvantage, much less to openly charge him with errors the most foreign to his nature. This had frequently been a subject of contention between him and Mr. Evans; but as the latter, when the heat of his temper abated, usually acknowledged the injustice of his remarks, they were as willingly overlooked by the former. However, in the present instance, Mr. Evington seemed uncommonly displeased, that his friend should exclaim in such harsh terms against Osmond, in presence of Mr. Varennes and young Melcourt: in his vindication, forgetting all resentment to his son, he observed rather sharply, that " Mr. Evans should be more guarded in his expressions against a youth undeserving of such epithets---nor is it generous," continued Mr. Evington, " to aggravate a misdemeanor in the absence of the party."

“ Ab-

“ Absent or present, sir,” retorted Mr. Evans angrily, and recollecting the cause of his daughter’s indisposition, “ I do not hesitate to repeat that such rashness is unpardonable---far less excusable than a thousand other vices---a rash man is a curse to himself and all around him: this dreadful impetuosity ought to be curbed by dear-brought experience, before he is too old; otherwise let me never see him related to me.---Zounds sir! he would drive me crazy---as mad as a march hare in less than a week, were he on these pranks with his wife.”

“ Your words, my dear sir, contradict themselves; it is not *you* he has offended---this warmth is unbecoming my friend, and what I could not forgive, were I not certain you affirm one thing and mean another.”---Mr. Varennes, willing to turn the conversation, offered his servant to pursue the gentleman, with any message Mr. Evington should think proper.---Mel-

court said little, and that little more concerning the loss of the ladies' company than of Osmond's.

Mr. Evington deliberated a few moments, whether to accept or to reject the offer, or suffer his son to accomplish his design. "If I send," thought Mr. Evington, "he may be embarked, or refuse to return : for he is resolute, even against every remonstrance, to obey the dictates of his heart, when he believes himself right.---He is neither wild nor inconsiderate ; I will, therefore, leave him to himself :---he thinks it necessary to avoid miss Evans, for which reason I foresee every lesser obstacle must, in his opinion, yield to the greater."---In consequence, Mr. Evington politely declined the offer made by Mr. Varennes, partially signifying his motives.

The petulance of Mr. Evans' temper being subsided, he began to repent what
had

had inadvertently escaped his lips.---A thousand fears that his violence had tended to incense Osmond's father, offered themselves to torment his calmed reflections; and he now most urgently pressed Mr. Evington to accept the offer, and dispatch the servant with a letter to recal Osmond; or even to permit Mr. Evans himself to follow him with a verbal message.

"He is much indebted for your kind offer," replied Mr. Evington, "but I request it as a particular favour that no message of any kind be sent: I have the best reasons for imposing this injunction, which another time I will explain."

During these proceedings below stairs, Maria had informed her mother of all she knew respecting the cause of this transaction, with the conversation she had held both nights with Matilda and Osmond; which amply accounted for his

absence and her indisposition.---Mrs. Evington wept; she dreaded the sudden check it would give her husband's fond expectation. She lamented the loss of Matilda as a daughter, and the misery it occasioned her son; yet more poignantly than all these, did she lament the unfortunate progress which she perceived Melcourt had made in the affections of Maria.

Nor was the tender Mrs. Munster in a less perplexing situation; having assured herself that Matilda had deferred delivering her scrap, and therefrom arose his visible distress of mind the preceding evening ---“ Advise me, my dear madam,” said Matilda, as soon as Mrs. Varennes left the room, “ advise me how to act: if my father learns that Osmond has behaved thus unkindly to me, notwithstanding the scrap, he will fly in a passion, and declare it a premeditated affront: if I tell Mr. and Mrs. Evington,
they

they may conclude that my answer was so cool, as to imply a negative, or it may occasion a breach between father and son.---No! Osmond may accuse me of indifference, but he shall never deem me ungenerous. With your consent, my dear madam, the contents of my scrap, with his own, shall be kept secret: a few days may bring him back."---Whatever were Mrs. Munster's private thoughts, she assented to the proposal.---Matilda also wished to rejoin the parties at breakfast; adding, that inasmuch as her indisposition had given them pain, her presence would restore pleasure; and that she thought herself adequate to appear again; "especially," said she, "as my father is always restless and uneasy if I am unwell, and he would now magnify my complaint into a dangerous malady, and be sending for some of those physicians, whose attendance would be lost upon me."

Such were the motives assigned by Matilda to Mrs. Munster ; but she was influenced by other considerations, which her heart told her were of a nature not to be so easily communicated.

CHAP. VI.

"~~How quickly nature~~
Falls to revolt, when gold becomes her object !"

SHAKSPEARE.

THE unexpected departure of Osmond, gave a depression to the good spirits of the circle, which they could by no means surmount. Every individual assigned a different cause for his sudden disappearance, and carefully kept their own opinion to themselves, with the view to lessen the chagrin of each ; which very circumspection tended eventually to entangle and perplex, what a few confidential words would have satisfactorily explained and remedied.

Melcourt alone rejoiced ; whatever were his feigned sentiments, his heart secretly approved this step in the man he

called his *friend* ! inasmuch as it left him unconstrained ; it removed, at once, what had heretofore been a formidable barrier to his wishes ; not, however, on Matilda's account ; for as the field lay open, and the enemy flown, he now disregarded the conquest ; besides, Matilda's emphatic words were still fresh in his memory ; “ Not him who avowedly professes his wish to rival the unfortunate Menelaus.” The expression was certainly allegorical ; yet the decided manner with which it was pronounced, and the repulsive look which accompanied it, indubitably gave him to understand the implied meaning.

Melcourt had long flattered himself with having obtained Maria's affection, although he apparently disregarded the many mentionless attentions which, without forwardness, were perpetually renewed by the gentle and ever-obliging Maria.—He foresaw it would be an easy task

task to subdue her heart, when it might best suit his convenience, which entirely depended on his success with Matilda, whose fortune had always been a great magnet of attraction. She was the only daughter of a rich father, in a precarious state of health ; added to which, Mrs. Varennes had secretly sanctioned this connection, with the assurance of leaving her fortune to Melcourt, provided he married Matilda, who, next to her darling Protégé, Melcourt, she most tenderly loved. Thus circumstanced, he had artfully practised a double part ; in Matilda's absence, he summoned every soft persuasive argument to inveigle Maria's affections, and to keep alive that preference he knew himself possessed of, yet under the pretence of mere *badinage* ; while he openly courted her friend. But he now determined to change his position, and make a regular assault on Maria's affection, strengthened by Matilda's studiously avoiding him ever since Osmond's

F 5 departure.

departure. This resolution received additional force in the course of the ensuing day, by the following discourse with Mr. Evans.

“ De Melcourt,” said Mr. Evans, “ your attentions to my daughter have been too evident for you to imagine they could pass unobserved. I have before said her own choice will ever meet with my approbation, and I give you my honour that I never biased her affections either as a father or a friend.—I this morning asked her if your attentions were agreeable, as I thought I observed an usual embarrassment in her deportment towards you latterly.”—She candidly replied, ‘ On the contrary ; that they greatly distressed her ; and that she hoped she had, directly or indirectly, intimated as much.’ Now, my young friend, although our stay here will be very short, suffer me to request you will desist your attentions to Matilda. This conversation is entirely between

between ourselves, and shall remain unnoticed, if your behaviour convinces me you take it in the friendly manner I mean it."

Melcourt could not do otherwise than comply with Mr. Evans' request: in return, he lamented his unfortunate fate, which he said could be meliorated only by her fair friend, Miss Evington, whose perfections so nearly approached the all-conquering Miss Evans."—Mr. Evans smiled on perceiving Melcourt's heart so pliant, and promised to become his advocate with Miss Evington.

Meanwhile Maria had faithfully executed her brother's commission to Matilda, which, to their mutual joy and surprize, cleared up the fatal misunderstanding that had taken place between them; and occasioned the dilemma in which they were mutually involved; for had Maria imagined Matilda indifferent

to Melcourt, her persuasions would doubtless have prevented her brother effecting his project, and have disengaged her from a maze of perplexing difficulties. Maria now concluded from what Matilda said, that her scrap must be the answer Osmond alluded to in his letter and conversation; yet he mentioned, her disdaining to give him an answer. Matilda had all along forgot to observe that she threw the scrap on the carpet.—“She certainly then avoided,” thought Maria “answering that part nearest his heart, and therefore he regards it as no reply.”—She determined however to write for further explanation, and till that arrived to evade the topic with her fair friend.

Scraps being still prevalent, and always adopted on the most important as well as the most trifling subject, they flew about as rapidly as ever, and were now the welcome harbingers to Maria’s
 partial

partial heart, of Melcourt's declaration. Diffimulation constituted no part of her disposition. Delighted to learn that he had not—as she previously believed—addressed Matilda, she accepted the long-cherished boon with undisguised pleasure, and saved many of his scraps to shew to her mother.—Melcourt, on his part, strenuously urged his suit with Mr. Evington, who peremptorily deferred giving any answer until he had privately consulted with his wife. Overjoyed to find her doubts were unexpectedly removed, Mrs. Evington heard her husband with pleasure, and readily assented to Melcourt's addresses, particularly as Maria had hitherto never testified a partiality for any other person.—Mr. and Mrs. Varennes were next to be consulted, whose explanation, if concordant with Melcourt's proposals, would erase every obstacle, save that of his being a foreigner. To Mr. Evington this last objection was of considerable magnitude:—he regretted

ted having prolonged his visit at Bruges ; but as regrets were unavailing, he turned necessity to generosity, and waved his aversion to the intermarrying betwixt different nations, since it tended to promote his child's happiness, whose credulous heart seemed wrapt in Melcourt's.

Mrs. Varennes confessed herself mortified that her favourite had met a refusal. She even began to dislike Matilda, as wanting judgment and capable of cruelty. She now hated Osmond, whom she considered as the sole cause of her own and Melcourt's disappointment, and sought every opportunity to disparage him in the esteem of Mr. Varennes. Despairing, however, of the projected union taking place between her two favourites, she was stimulated by revenge to assent to Melcourt's addressing Maria ; hoping the sudden transfer would pique Matilda's pride, on finding her superior charms so easily resigned.—Mr. Varennes having
little

little to bestow, and subjected to his wife's controul in every thing where she had power, complied as a thing of course.—Circumstances being thus settled, Melcourt, seconded by all parties, made rapid progress towards the completion of his wishes. Letters were dispatched to Osmond, and the time already elapsed when Mr. Evington intended to continue his long-projected journey, which Mrs. Munster much wished renewed, to dissipate the anxiety that preyed upon Matilda's mind, notwithstanding every effort to remove it. Since she had confessed Osmond master of her heart, he reigned there with unbounded sway; every other society became irksome and insipid: the charm that tranquillized her spirits, vanished with him; and she now only appreciated truly the pleasure she had so long enjoyed, comparatively unregarded, and more than ever condemned her insensibility. In this state of mind, she heard, with infinite satisfaction, the beginning

ginning of the next week fixed upon for taking a final leave of Bruges. This satisfaction was somewhat increased, from perceiving the alteration in Mrs. Varennes' conduct towards herself, which, from no assignable reason that Matilda knew of, became tauntingly unkind.—Melcourt had obtained permission to accompany his intended bride. But since the transfer that had taken place in his addresses, Matilda felt more at ease in his company.

Soon after this, the quadrille tables being set as usual, Mr. and Mrs. Varennes had scarcely finished the first game, when the tinkling of a little bell aroused their attention, and they both hastily left the table, to kneel before the window.—“Hark! hark!” ejaculated Mrs. Varennes, “the host is passing.” Then putting her hands together, she began to repeat her “*Paternoster*,” premised, however, by a sudden turn of the head, and saying, “Remember I play ponto—spadille,

dille, manille, and basto, are out ; there are only two trumps remaining, and Mr. Evans is next to play."—Then muttered, " Paternoster, ave Maria," &c.—Mr. Varennes bent one knee, Melcourt stood ; and the rest of the party rose in compliment from their seats. Two minutes concluded the ceremony.—Mrs. Varennes, who had constantly kept a watchful eye on the card-table, ran to her place, declaring she would play the *vôle*, having just recollected that she held all the best clubs in her own hand.—The *vôle* was then pronounced, and would have been won, had not very provokingly the four of clubs, in Mrs. Evington's hand, made bold to take the three, which card Mrs. Varennes concluded would have completed her promised *vôle*.—The disappointment was attended with visible marks of displeasure in Mrs. Varennes, until another vole, *sans prendre*, restored the smile of self-approbation on her countenance.

The

The ensuing morning Mrs. Evington was much surprized by the following note—

“ Sir Stanhope and Lady Murdoc present compliments to Mr. and Mrs. Evington ; learning the family are still at Bruges, they will have the pleasure to call on them on their way to Italy.”

“ *Friday night.*”

Hope, fallacious hope, palpitated in every heart, which fondly anticipated grateful news of Lady Beaufort ; or that perhaps on their route they might have met with their strayed friend Osmond. About two o'clock a splendid equipage drove up ; an authoritative knock announced the guests, and the dressing-room door was shortly after thrown open for Lady Stanhope Murdoc, in the person of Miss Patty Armintor, who simpering, and with an affected air, exclaimed, that she could hardly support the barbarous
fatigue

fatigue of the carriage, since she had crossed the still more barbarous ocean.—
 “ Well, my dear friends, I declare I am vastly overjoyed to see you.”—The compliment being returned, Mrs. Evington enquired for Sir Stanhope ; congratulated her on her change of situation, expressing her wish to learn if she had left her mother in better health.

“ Why really, my dear madam, my impatience to see you prevented my waiting for Sir Stanhope ; he walked out while I was at my toilet.—You see, my dear madam, I am yoked in the matrimonial plough : ‘ *With him each anxious wish I share,* ’ as the song says—So there was no resisting his importunities.—As to my mother, I have not seen her these three months. The old lady, *entre nous*, was averse to what she pretended would make me miserable all my life. Now, my dear madam, Sir Stanhope’s family is one of the noblest and most opulent we
 have ;

have ; therefore had it not been an advantageous connection, as to pecuniary matters, I should have been more tractable to the lady's *fatigues*, which, in truth, old age, misfortunes, and I know not what other *chimeras*, had long made nearly unsupportable----really harassed my nerves---preyed on my feelings---but I have no doubt but we shall soon be friends again.---As you always, my dear Maria, took a tender concern in what respects me, if you like I will give you the whole account circumstantially."

" I will not encroach so much on your ladyship's time," replied Maria ; " I am sensible the recapitulation of a subject so distressing, as that of having offended your mother, would be attended with painful sensations ; and, therefore, at the same time that I would spare your ladyship the recital, I beg to assure you of my sincere wishes for a reconciliation between you."

" Recon-

“ Reconciliation !” exclaimed Lady Murdoc, happy beyond measure to observe the wonder and surprize that marked the countenances of all present,—
 “ la, blefs me ! I have had fo much to do with vifiting my numerous acquaintance ! —that I have been fcarcely allowed time to think of it”— then began humming in her ufual manner “ *From pleafure to pleafure I run.*”

“ Certainly,” faid Mrs. Evington, “ thofe are concerns that occupy a multiplicity of hours, and your ladyfhip being a *novice* in the fchool of fafhion, is probably yet unacquainted with the juft diftribution of your time ; otherwife you might perhaps find that fome part of it, even among the higheft in rank and title, is allotted to parental devoirs.”

Lady Murdoc feemed hurt at this farcaftic reproof, but evinced it only by a tofs of the head, and continued, affectingly fipping the chocolate fhe held,

“ La,

“ La, my dear Mrs. Evington, you and my mother are old cronies every body knows—I cannot imagine,”—continued her ladyship nodding her high and profuse plumes from side to side—“ what is become of my *caro sposo*.”

“ I suppose,” replied Mrs. Evington, “ your ladyship is not to learn that it is very unfashionable for man and wife to be seen together—Nay, I am told, its never the case but among antiquarians—*Such*, indeed, and rustics, are so horridly unfashionable, as to give a decided preference to their matrimonial partners, and, what is more extraordinary, are said to enjoy each other’s society.”

“ Hah! hah! hah!—La blefs me, how wicked you are! I am sure then Sir Stanhope will be always unfashionable; for the creature swears he only lives in my presence—So you see, mem! there are exceptions to this rule in the *bu mund*!” cried her ladyship.—Many interrogatories were then made concerning Lady Beaufort.

Beaufort. But the same cause doubtless that prevented Lady Murdoc from seeking a reconciliation with her tender and indulgent mother, excluded her also from the virtuous society of Lady Beaufort's company ; and she replied, that " mutual morning visits and cards had passed between them—and that her ladyship seemed as well as might be expected---you know, mem---he ! he ! he !---she is a constant visitor at all the gay places, and *had been* much talked of---that I can assure you on a certainty---and that she has been quite the belle of the day for some time, till a little gipsy came, with a fine romantic name, who had turned all the men's heads, and is killing all the female sex with envy ; though for my part I see nothing in her so very bewitching."

" Who is this enviable person ?" asked Maria ; " your ladyship, I hope, will make us acquainted with her name."

" Her name---her name---let me see---
her

her name---la blefs me!---her name"---continued lady Murdoc, repeating the words, her name, over and over again, with her fore-finger to her lip, while the hind one displayed a dazzling ring, upon a *very* red finger---“ her name---is---is---*Jessey*---ah! *Jessey*---*what-ye-call-um*---*Jessey* something---‘ *Amidst* the illusions, that o’er the mind flutter.’---Pshaw! pshaw!--I really forget, *poz*, *Jessey*—*Jessey*—la blefs me! I have a *barbarous* memory.”

“ Oh, I make no doubt,” replied Maria, “ it is the same person whom my sister mentioned in her last letter, Miss Montgomery, with whom I understand she is very intimate.”

Sir Stanhope Murdoc here made his appearance, casting an indignant look at his lady as he entered. As soon as the usual enquiries were over, she rose to take her leave, and exclaimed in the same breath—“ La, my dear Sir Stanhope,

hope, you rambling creature, where have you been all this long, long time? I am just going—shall I send the coach to fetch you?”—“*No*, madam,” returned her *dear* Sir Stanhope, “you will please to wait my leisure, and learn in future when I desire to accompany you, not to take yourself off without me.”—The contraction his features underwent, while the *noble* baronet spoke, portrayed that his anger would not be appeased by resistance.—Lady Murdoc, endeavouring to assume a chearful face, although her heart sunk within her, replied, “La, my dear, you accuse me, I am sure, wrongfully—for you know all my happiness is with you—I can have no greater pleasure than to wait, if you wish it, love!—If I came here in a hurry, these dear friends occasioned my haste, and I hope will plead my excuse.”—Mrs. Evington did so, while she silently lamented the bonds of slavery with which this giddy girl had fettered herself.—It

required little penetration to discover, by his manner and enquiring eyes, that she had married a jealous ill-tempered old rake, merely for the shallow compensation of title and fortune.—The great alteration Sir Stanhope's emaciated figure had sustained for the worse, struck her exceedingly—he appeared to have one foot already in the grave, and, in a galloping consumption, tottering on the verge of eternity.

Having adjusted the conjugal dispute, Sir Stanhope informed them, that he was travelling to regain his health, which, from some cause or other, principally from the effects he believed of a neglected cold, was rather deranged: “however, I trust,” continued Sir Stanhope, “that a warm climate, change of air, and her ladyship's assiduity, will restore it.”—Having staid nearly two hours, as if purposely to mortify his lady, at length she

folly ! folly ! where is thy end ? Vanity,
where is not thy lure ?”

Matilda and Mrs. Munster just came in
from a walk, and heard with regret the
curious visit they had missed,

CHAPTER VII.

“ Bow’d to the yoke, and, soon as she could read,
 Tutor’d to get by heart the despot’s creed,
 She shall thy will implicitly receive,
 Nor act, nor speak, nor think without thy leave.
 Then, and then only, is obedience seen.”

CHURCHILL.

ALL things were preparing for Mr. and Mrs. Evington’s departure the next morning in the barge ; and Melcourt, charmed with the idea of attending the party up the beautiful canal from Bruges to Ghent, longed for the hour to arrive, while sweet content gleamed on the countenances of all, excepting those of Mr. and Mrs. Varennes, who were, nevertheless, far from sorry to lose their guests, notwithstanding Mr. Evington’s lengthened visits arose entirely from their pressing solicitations ; but Mr. and Mrs.

Varennés were now getting old, and accustomed to live much by themselves ; they grew tired of the constant hurry of so many people in their house.

The night before the intended departure, a loud ringing at the gate-bell surprised the company, as they were taking their seats round the supper-table, and seemed to announce the arrival of an untimely messenger.—These doubts were hardly created, before a servant entered the room with a letter to Melcourt, apprizing him that a relation was on her death-bed, who desired to see him immediately, as her remembrance of him would be proportionate to his alacrity in obeying her present summons.—Melcourt imparted the contents of this letter to the circle, and as it obliged him to compass many miles, Mr. Varennés judged it necessary that he should set off that evening. Melcourt imprecated a volubility of invectives against his dying relation---

tion—"A miserly old cat!" cried he, "I'll bet a thousand to one the croaking bigot will leave all her fortune at last to the church, or to some old confessor, that has given her absolution for her sins."—However, he found himself compelled to take leave of the company without further delay; and promising to rejoin them at the Hague, he flung himself into a chaise and four, and departed that evening in compliance with the old lady's commands.

The following day Mr. and Mrs. Varennes bade an affectionate farewell to their guests, Mr. and Mrs. Evington, Mr. Evans, Mrs. Munster, Maria, and Matilda, and saw them safe embarked on board the barge that constantly goes from Bruges to Ghent.—Our passengers were highly gratified with the extreme cleanliness, neatness, and good accommodations of this boat. A large canopy, erected on the stern of the vessel, is fitted

up with convenient benches, to screen the scorching beams of the sun, or shelter from the inclemency of the weather. Below stairs is an excellent cabin, well furnished; where they partook of a remarkably good dinner, consisting of a variety of dishes, well dressed, and well served up. The dinner table is fixed round the room, and on each side are benches covered with handsome damask cushions. Mr. Evington here learnt, on being surpris'd to find himself so well entertained, that a man cook is kept purposely to dress victuals for the passengers, who are provided with every thing the markets of Bruges and Ghent can afford.

Besides themselves in the barge, were two very elegant young women, an elderly lady, six gentlemen, and several French abbés. The motion of the barge is scarcely discernable, being drawn by two or more horses, along the banks—banks so beautifully diversified by delightful verdure
and

and picturesque country seats, elegant gardens, temples, and grottos, of the nobility, situate close upon the water-side; forming scenes exquisitely charming to every admirer of nature.—Small, however, as was the motion of the boat, it proved too much for Matilda, who found herself necessitated to leave the company in the room below, and again take possession of a seat on deck, not much against her inclination; for the beautiful scenery that decorated the banks of the river, yielded superior satisfaction to a mind like her's, than the conversation that passed at the table, or the viands with which it was spread.

A young lady, from a similar cause, though more accustomed to this mode of travelling, had declined partaking of the dinner, and now welcomed Matilda on deck. The stranger's pleasing and engaging countenance invited her to conversation.—“ I perceive, madam,” said Matilda,

tilda, " we are both very much out of our element : suffer me to offer you a few drops of *eau-de-luce*, from which I always find considerable relief."—" I will accept it," replied the stranger, " because you have the goodness to recommend it ; but I apprehend my disorder is too deeply rooted to be eradicated by medicine."

There was a dejection and apparent settled melancholy, that accompanied these words, which even touched the heart. Her extreme youth seemed almost too tender to have experienced any acute misfortune, yet it appeared not to be the affliction of a day that affected her. Delicacy prevented Matilda's inquiries into the cause of the lady's grief ; but her searching eye, replete with sympathy, stole from her the story of her sorrows.— " I see," said the fair stranger, " curiosity is painted on your face ; as I have excited it, I am perhaps bound to gratify it ; mine
is

is a tale of woe, yet, such as it is, provided you have patience to listen to a series of distress, I will recount it." Matilda enjoined her not to satisfy that curiosity at the expence of wounding her feelings. " Ah, no !" replied the fair sufferer, " they are too lively in my memory, to want a moment's recollection—need I say, that I am not very old ; last Saturday I entered my one-and-twentieth year, which I regret having seen, for my only happy hours were those when—

" Like April show'rs the tears of youth descend,
 " Sudden they fall, and suddenly they end ;
 " Serener pleasures gild the following hours,
 " As brighter gleams the sun, when past the show'rs."

As soon as my feelings were awakened from the insensibility of childish indifference, I was subjected to the ill-tempered upbraidings of my teachers, who took every occasion to remind me that it entirely depended on their good-will to provide for me, or turn me from their Convent ; for that I had not a penny in the world,

and ought not to give myself airs. My pride,—for perhaps, madam, I had more than in such a helpless and apparent indigent situation was thought proper,—often revolted at these repeated sarcasms, and I would with pleasure have fled from a place, and from people I never liked, to obtain subsistence even in servitude ; but as to escape would have been impracticable, the hope became fruitless.—I ever took great delight in books, and had a memory tolerably retentive. The Community expected I should remain on their hands, and therefore, judged it expedient to have me instructed grammatically in their own language ; trusting that in the course of time, I might supply the place of a French master to the boarders ; I was therefore put under the tuition of Mr. Dublanc.—I attended with zealous fervour to my studies, and made a rapid progress ; yet, from his instructions being *gratis*, you may easily credit, that when pressed for time, or tired with the dulness and

and obstinacy of other scholars, I was, without ceremony, the person neglected, and severely reprimanded if by chance my exercises admitted of correction.—The music master, unsolicited, had requested to teach me music, to gratify his own pleasure, having by accident perceived I had some genius for that accomplishment; and it is only justice to say, that he took uncommon pains to make me a proficient; nor did I spare my own efforts.—Yet to be looked upon, and feel myself a poor dependant on every body's kindness towards my education, fretted me exceedingly, and was ultimately productive of a long fit of illness.

“ I had never, to my knowledge, then seen either father or mother, and only knew they existed in a sphere of life, that little authorised the dependent state of their daughter.—I knew also, I had a sister, who had never seen or written to me. Twice my brother called, unknown to his family,

family, and his affectionate behaviour compensated, in a small degree, for the unnatural cruelty of my parents. Could I have been blest more frequently with his visits, my exile would have been supportable; for although at fifteen I was a stranger to the world, I became well acquainted with its manners, which my juvenile imaginations pictured far more desirable than I found them. My fellow-pensioners failed not to describe their knowledge of it, in the most glowing colours, which probably, in their young minds, appeared in its true light.

“ After twelve years’ seclusion, one morning I was summoned to the *parlour*: on entering I found my brother with another young man, waiting for me: they were both dressed in deep mourning; and involuntarily I exclaimed, ‘ Good God!—shall I then never behold my parents!—are they dead, without even blessing or seeing their child?’—and I burst into a flood.

flood of tears, on the bosom of the lady abbess, who had accompanied me.—A long pause ensued, which confirmed my apprehension.—To say that I loved my parents, would be advancing a ridiculous falsehood; but I revered the tender name of father and mother, and had indulged the pleasing idea, how tenderly I could have loved them, had they been only passing kind to me. I frequently witnessed the maternal fondness many mothers evinced for their children, during my residence in the convent. I viewed their anxiety for *their children's* happiness, while the tears trickled heavily down my own cheek, recollecting mine were living, but not for *me*—an helpless orphan, discarded, unnoticed, and unbefriended. When I beheld the tender mother, after an absence of a year or two, return with the tears of joy glistening in her eye, to fetch her daughter!--when I beheld my delighted school-fellow leap into her fond arms, exulting that her time was expired, how has my heart

heart bounded to be free!—and while the joyful smile illumined many, whose happy deliverance approached, the deep sigh alone relieved my oppressed bosom, to which no cheering prospect offered an alleviation of its distress. In the society and conversation of one of the nuns, I experienced some consolation ; her kindness to me was unremitting, yet her affection sometimes caused me to mourn the privation of my mother's even more poignantly. Assiduously I wished to avoid every subject that tended to make me regret the loss of liberty, or the pleasures of the world, lest it might awaken, in her own bosom, any stifled recollection of former pleasures, scenes which her duty, and habitation, required to have obliterated from her memory. I dearly loved her, and enjoyed no sort of amusement in her absence ; to see her, to converse with her for only five minutes, I have waited many hours. I have often quitted my bed ere the sun darted its glimmering rays

rays on the convent walls, to be the first to greet her in the morning ; still, as I concealed the chief burden of my heart from her confidence, I felt an irresistible restraint in my conversation, because I was fearful that any unguarded subject of controversy might awaken the sigh of retrospection in the bosom of her I most loved on earth, and valued more than my life, which I often wished ended.—Forgive me, madam, I have digressed from my point.—I left my brother in the parlour—as soon as I recovered my surprise, ‘ tell me,’ I cried, ‘ I conjure you tell me, if they are *both* dead ?’—‘ my dear Adeline, compose yourself,’ said my brother ; --‘ your father died yesterday of a putrid fever : he commissioned me to bring you his departing blessing, and implore your prayers of forgiveness for the ill usage you have endured, which arose from a hateful thirst of riches ; and in order to render me opulent, he would have buried my dearest Adeline in obscurity.—Little did he
know

know the sentiments of his son, when he supposed I would live on the property of an immured sister; inhumanly despoiled of every enjoyment in life. But he is gone: his son shall not disturb his departed ashes with reflections, however justly merited; peace to his soul! Your mother has caught the fatal distemper—she still lives, but is in a dangerous state. In the agonies of remorse, she incessantly calls upon your name; yet no argument can persuade her to have you brought into her presence.—But prepare, my dear Adeline, prepare to leave the convent—I wish you to superintend my house.* ‘To leave the convent!’ I exclaimed, doubting my own ears, ‘are you in earnest, de Choiseul?—Am I indeed to leave the convent?—oh! quick then, for heaven’s sake, repeat the affirmation, so grateful to my desponding heart!’—My eyes darted with rapture, my face glowed with delight; heedless that the superior was present, I continued

in

in a sort of frenzied extacy; involuntarily falling on my knees—‘ Oh ! God ! my prayers are heard ! yes, I own the Almighty protects those who trust in him—still, does he hear the voice of persecuted innocence.’—‘ Such extravagant joy,’ observed the lady abbess, raising me impatiently from this supplicating posture, with a forbidding frown on her angry countenance,—‘ such joy ill becomes you, Miss de Choiseul, at a time your poor dear mother lies on her death-bed ; recollect with some degree of respect, that she is preparing to accompany your honoured father to the tremendous regions of eternity—forebear Adeline !—let this awful theme inspire you with religious reverence—check these indecent effusions of worldly considerations.’—The stern manner with which she delivered these words, accompanied, nevertheless, with evident embarrassment---unnoticed by my brother, from her veil half covering her face—sufficiently convinced me that there lingered
beneath

beneath her agitation, some concealment respecting myself, the threatening scowl upon her knitted brow, made me tremble; but the dear recollection that I should soon be out of her power, revived my dispirited heart.—Every fear vanished with the moment—I began already to wish myself out of the parlour, that I might impart the joy that took possession of my soul.

“ ‘ Adeline,’ said my brother, ‘ here are five hundred livres * to defray any trifling debts you may have incurred—perhaps they are unnecessary, as, of late years, I know your father has been bountiful in his allowance.’—This speech staggered me, as I never received above a few sous † a week, frequently nothing, and was taught to believe that my parents paid for my board only

“ ‘ I accept,’ said I, ‘ your present with

* An hundred French livres is not quite five pounds English money; a livre being only ten-pence.

† A French sol or sou is a halfpenny.

gratitude;

gratitude ; a very small part will enable me to acquit my debts, and make my acknowledgements ; but I apprehend you mistake, Vivien, respecting any allowance, save my pension—does he not, madam ?”—addressing myself to the abbess, whose answer my brother interrupted—‘ *Pardieu !* ’ exclaimed Choiseul, ‘ there is no mistake, unless that lady has made it, by omitting paying you two louis a month, besides a very handsome sufficiency for clothes and masters, which you, madam, cannot deny.’

“ The confusion of the abbess could no longer be concealed ; with much hesitation she replied, ‘ Sir, your honoured parents had several times giving me to understand their resolute intention that Miss Adeline was to become one of our worthy sisterhood ; I looked upon her already as a consecrated member of our community—accordingly we gave her what little money was requisite for her pocket, judging it improper, under such restrictions,

restrictions, to accustom her young mind to those luxuries she must inevitably renounce for the practice of meekness, humility, and forbearance, the never fading virtues agreeable to the exemplifier of true magnanimity, and the certain conducts to celestial happiness.'

" ' Happiness ! ' re-echoed my brother angrily—' It seems you have taken care, madam, if I may guess by her earnestness to depart from hence, to lead her in the ~~fore~~ road of terrestrial misery.—Shame ! upon you, madam ! is it thus you abuse the confidence reposed in you ?—her very situation claimed your peculiar indulgence. If you truly served that God you pretend to do, you would have given, and not have taken from the oppressed daughter of affluence—Come, Adeline, hasten from this place, which I once revered, but which I now abominate.'

" I left my brother and the superior still conversing, and with an elated heart imparted the glad tidings to my
only

only beloved friend ‘ *L’Annonciation* ’—she heard me with undissembled pleasure, while tears from her very heart bedewed her cheek in rapid succession; for she really loved me, and being the youngest nun, had no voice concerning the pecuniary arrangements of the household; consequently could not have been subservient to the deceit which the superior nuns displayed on this occasion.—She took both my hands in her’s, saying, ‘ My dearest little friend, I have long observed with secret concern, your eagerness to emerge from hence; and after all to enter a world replete with the baneful weeds of malice, envy, hatred, and pollution, beneath a parterre of fair flowers which flourish with difficulty; and are eternally exposed to the scorching rays of adulation, to the keen blast of envy, to the heavy rains of adversity, to the pelt-ing hail of calumny, to the hard frost of poverty, to the cold snow of disdain, and to the sharp winds of heartfelt disappointments.

pointments. To all these inclemencies, and many nameless ills, will my dear girl be exposed—yes, Adeline, notwithstanding your endeavours to conceal it from me, by a continual and strict observance, I have penetrated every emotion of your soul: I saw the struggle was insurmountable; but as I understood from my sister nuns that you were destined for the cloister, I pretended not to notice the conflicting passions of your heart: I carefully avoided giving an additional pang to your bosom by hinting that you were to dwell with us, and within these walls for ever!—a circumstance which, though I dearly loved your company, grieved me bitterly. I knew that though you might reconcile yourself to submit, you could never enjoy our sequestered life. Often when I assured you that my taking the veil was an act of my own choice, even against the inclination of my friends, you have listened to me, my sweet girl,’ continued she with a benignant smile, ‘ you have
heard

heard me with an apparent acquiescence ; and when I expressed my contentedness, and the serene happiness I enjoy in this state, a sigh has escaped your disbelieving bosom ; and though your lips credited my words, your heart denied their truth. —I suspected, nay I know it did.—I again repeat the asseveration from my soul: indeed, my love, I would not exchange situations for a diadem!--You have seen me, conversed with me, and been with me at all times. Have I ever evinced the smallest restlessness, depression of spirits, thoughtfulness, or regret?---Then, be assured, before you depart, that there are in the cloisters many who are enviably happy ; nor can it be denied that there are others as truly miserable.—I rejoice that my dear Adeline will not add one to that unhappy number. I participate your unexpected good fortune, and will offer my fervent prayers for your happiness through life—through a world----ah ! my dear Adeline !'-----tears fell fast on

her hands---a world which I tremble for your entering into---You are little aware of the cares that await you: your susceptible heart is too gentle to ward off unforeseen evil; your disposition too generous and your bosom too guileless, to suspect guile in others. Let me advise you, my dear girl, to mistrust flattery---man is an artful being; and, when the least feared, is too often most powerfully dangerous---I know you to be warm in your friendships; you will be equally ardent in those attachments nearer your heart. In as much as you value your eternal peace of mind, trust not that heart to an object unworthy of the prize: beware of your first affection, and be well assured of the honour and fidelity of him on whom you bestow it. Virtuous love is the greatest of all human blessings; and when it is reciprocal, heaven can add no more to human felicity. You may, perhaps, think these sentiments inconsistent with my recluse habit; or that because I am a nun, I must

must be ignorant of the human passions, and fancy them eradicated from my breast. Surely such a conclusion would bespeak a narrow mind, a littleness of soul, which neither contracts nor enlarges with the adoption of an habit. I am not unacquainted with the first, nor do I mean to banish the second. You know, my Adeline, “ the heart is deceitful above all things,” and through life you will find it so. Do not then rely solely on its dictates, especially if it regards any thing pleasurable to yourself. Alas ! we are miserable judges of our own happiness. We imperceptibly incline to the side most pleasing to our fancy ; we see in it innumerable reasons for our adoption ; but our partiality hides from us the motives that ought to induce its rejection : hence nothing but the prevailing voice of firm friendship can lure us from latent evil, and spare us the pangs of unavailing repentance. You, dear girl, will sometimes recal to memory the tran-

quiet hours we have passed together, beguiled by the laughter of innocence, heedless of the morrow.---May you never have any unhappy reason to recollect those lessons of fortitude and of patience, it has been my ambition to instil into your tender mind.---My orisons to heaven shall be lengthened that those lessons may be rendered useless. But such is the thread of life, that it is seldom, perhaps never, cut asunder unentangled by numberless knots, twists, and turns, all of which have been, from its peculiar delicacy, inconceivably difficult to disengage; they require the most consummate precaution, with steady perseverance, becoming fortitude, and long tried patience.—My Adeline, remember to hold all promises inviolably sacred; hence you will be careful not to promise hastily.---Do not, in any sphere of life, forget the claims of the poor; and let your purse be ever open, as is now your heart, to acts of generosity.---Above all things, despond not
 because,

because, peradventure, you meet with ingratitude from those you have protected: rather encrease your donations until you find more worthy objects: and when your charity is abused, as it frequently will be, recollect that the benevolent act is nevertheless recorded in *heaven* by the angel of truth.-- Learn duly to estimate your own worth; not without that humility which is so sweetly graceful; nor without that decent pride, if pride we must call it, which is so requisite to the interests and to the dignity of virtue.---Look with pity on your enemies; for enemies you will have; and learn to disappoint those who from envy or revenge would oppress you;---disappoint them by rendering your conduct unexceptionable; and when they are stung by that disappointment, teach them, sweet girl, what it is to be an angel of light, and---forgive them! Now, my little friend,' added she, 'I will detain you no longer. I am too sincerely interested

rested in your happiness and welfare not to wish being apprized of all that concerns you ; write to me constantly, and when an opportunity offers, or chance bends your steps towards the Ursulines, remember L'Annonciation ; and remember that she will receive you with that tender affection, that genuine friendship, which she now feels in her sinking heart overwhelmed with grief to part with you.'---She embraced me tenderly, and left me abruptly."----

CHAPTER VIII.

Adeline's Story continued.

" I WAS too much affected with the words and manner of L'Annonciation to make any reply. I stood motionless, leaning on one of the benches in the church, where I had found this dear and estimable friend, as the youngest of the sisterhood, cleaning them; I wished to have called her back, but my voice failed me. I can never forget what I felt at that moment: all her wonted kindneses recurred in quick succession to my imagination. The preceding admonitions, the calm and affectionate pathos with which they were delivered, engraved them indelibly on my memory, and forcibly struck me, that the period I had so long sighed for with hopeless expectation,

now it was arrived, offered nothing more than care and trouble.---I upbraided my own imbecility; persuaded I had appeared ungrateful; a thousand things rushed in my mind to say and to tell her, all of which I had totally omitted.

“ The superior’s ill behaviour, and the many insults I had been subjected to, for the want of those supplies which she had so cruelly withheld; my mean and contemptible appearance, in a common stuff gown, a black cap, and coloured apron, roused my indignation towards her. I sat me down on a bench, ruminating on these extraordinary occurrences, where I remained in deep cogitation, till awakened from my lethargy, by my name being repeatedly called upon. At the same moment I recollected, that my brother waited my return in the parlour.-----‘ Miss de Choiseul,’ said the nun who was calling, ‘ your brother desired me to inform you he will
come

come again at two ; meanwhile our good abbess requests, in the name of the community, that you will favour them with your company to coffee.'

" ' Then is my brother gone ? ' I exclaimed almost in despair,----' Alas ! perhaps not to return : why did you not call me before ? why have I loitered ?-- My respects to the superior ; I will attend her invitation presently.'----Which I did after bidding my school-fellows adieu. I previously repaired to the cell of L'Annonciation to disburthen my grateful, though loaded heart, and endeavour to atone for my former appearance of insensibility. I found her on her knees before a small table, and so entirely absorbed in meditation, that I entered unnoticed. My voice startled her----' *Bon Dieu, Adeline !* ' said she, ' I thought you were long since out of the convent' ---her eyes like my own were swollen--- ' you have been weeping'---continued she, ' oh fie ! my child,'---rising from her kneeling

kneeling posture----' You have surprized me in the act of offering my imperfect prayers to heaven, for the prosperity of my dear Adeline. I was invoking our guardian angel to direct your steps through life, and to strew your path with choicest blessings.'---After returning my thanks in a confused manner, I briefly delivered my sentiments respecting the unkindness of the superior, expressing my astonishment and regret at her conduct ; but as I was on the point of quitting the convent, and perfectly aware that words would not retrieve past occurrences, I avoided touching on the most heinous part of her conduct,---that of appropriating my pension for clothes to her own purposes, as L'Annonciation, in some measure, depended on the abbess, I judged it unadvisable to illustrate her defects in their real colour, confident it would lessen the regard, if not the respect she demanded : at length, by unceasing persuasion, I prevailed on my favourite

yourite nun to accompany me to the community, where I was received with unbounded demonstrations of affection, much too vehement for the pure impulse of affection; they severally lamented the loss of their ' dear Adeline,' which I knew arose from interested motives. I confess I heard them with a disdainful smile: indeed, my latent aversion defied the art of dissimulation; satisfied that all their transient amity, lay buried in mercenary prospects.---' Believe me, my dear girl,' said the abbess, ' if I limited your pocket, it was with the best motives, and should have reimbursed the difference, when age and experience would have taught you to make a better use of it than purchasing cakes and oranges. As it is, I shall, in your name, deposit the remainder in the *poor-box*, which, I have no doubt, will be agreeable to your benevolent disposition.'—I pretend not to say, this artful proposition received my approbation; it required little discernment to

penetrate the evasion. However, I forbore to expostulate on a point so delicate with a woman whose age and function otherwise claimed my veneration ; therefore, with an ill grace, I gave the following answer, not without some hesitation, and, perhaps, rather contemptuously ; for I felt my face flushed, and indeed my spirits were already extremely hurried ; a long silence preceded.---‘ Yes, madam, the money you allude to is now at your command, and to be disposed of as you shall judge proper. Had you been less considerate, had you suffered me to have enjoyed a small part of my allowance, I might now acknowledge your care with a true sense of the obligation, by voluntarily presenting *that*, as a grateful donation, which is at present exacted by compulsion. Whatever were your motives, madam, doubtless your own conscience can best justify ; nor do I by this mean to recede from my promise-- the money is your’s—and I hope it may benefit the
 poor

poor more effectually, than even my deceased father intended it should benefit his daughter.'

"Every face was marked with consternation. I may, without vanity, say, that I had heretofore evinced on all occasions an humble meekness of deportment, and placid mildness of temper. But my spirit was not broken to insensibility.—Another silence ensued, painful to me beyond description; for I felt more than I can express, at the evident discomposure of several of the oldest nuns.—Though my eyes were fixed in confusion on the ground, the pale countenance of guilt in one, and the reddening visage of others, could not but force themselves on my notice :—I looked up, and would have read in L'Annonciation's dear face, which was overspread with vexation for her sisterhood, how to act; whether to break a pause distressing to every individual, or to continue silent. The Lady
Abbess,

Abbess, either from resentment, or from repentance, sat absorbed in thought.— At length having recovered my agitation, I resolved to remove, if possible, the dilemma, and with less asperity I again addressed the superior: ‘What is past, madam, is irrecoverable:’ the poor will be considerable gainers; wherefore we will, if agreeable, commit the subject to oblivion, in wishing them as much happiness as such charity can bestow. — *En attendant*, with your permission, we will try our success at *loto*’—a game to which they were particularly partial,—‘and all the winnings of this day shall be added to the same fund.’ — My voice at first made them start, till my words reanimated their despondency, and without hesitation my request was adopted, with many flattering encomiums for the proposal, sanctioned by a smile of approbation from my dear L’Annonciation.—Two hours of feigned cheerfulness preceded that

that of taking a lasting farewell of the towering walls of the convent of St. Urselines.

"My dear madam," said the fair stranger, "I fear I am tediously minute, and have already tired your patience."

"You mistake," replied Matilda, "I ought to apologise for exhausting your spirits, and trespassing on your good humour. I assure you every circumstance becomes highly interesting.—Did you find your mother alive?"

"Alas! no, madam; she expired the night previous to my departure. I met my sister, who received me coolly, and continually upbraided my kind brother, for taking me from the convent, in such terms as to occasion at last an absolute quarrel.—I heard and trembled; I looked and sighed with wonder, on all that I witnessed; but ventured not to interfere on either side. A few months elapsed without any particular incident taking place.—Our mourning being very deep, my sister
admitted

admitted few visitors and seldom allowed my presence to any when she did: the unabating severity of her conduct towards me extended even to my friends, and in malignant taciturnity to my brother. They never associated but in company, and then, to appearance, as strangers. Under this family disunion, my life would have yielded to the burthen it had sustained, had not his sedulous and fraternal attentions tenderly shared it with me. At length, provoked past endurance, he resolved no longer to subject either himself or me to the capricious tyranny of her ill-humour. Having hired a house, he peremptorily addressed me before my sister by saying, "Adeline, with whom do you prefer to reside, your sister or myself? as two establishments must be henceforward adopted.—No hesitation, my dear sister; I expect a candid answer: think not on the rules of propriety, or on the limited prescription of prudence.—I appeal to your own heart, for whose tranquillity

tranquillity I am solicitous ; and I demand its uncontrouled dictates—leave the rest to my management ; your brother will not involve your future prospects.”—My sister Gertrude, somewhat surprised, desired me sarcastically to embrace my own ruin, instead of being happy according to my parents wishes in a convent, the only proper place for such an awkward simple girl.—This renewed proof of splenetic humour, though at all times too predominant, dispelled at once every reluctant idea I might otherwise have entertained on the subject. My inclination required no consulting, where my heart overflowed with gratitude.—With my brother I resided in happiness, sometimes indeed molested by my sister’s envy : Envy, that fiend of destruction, prompted her to violate every tie of nature, and even to circulate injurious reports respecting my reputation. My disposition is lively, but not volatile, and easily depressed. Although I knew these shafts of slander were

were wholly unmerited, and though my own conscience acquitted me, they caused me heartfelt concern. My dear brother, ever attentive to the least alteration in my countenance, discovered my anxiety.---One morning as I sat at work by his side, I thought he appeared vexed: I told him so---‘ You misjudge not, Adeline,’ replied Vivien, ‘ I am vexed, and with you.’—This reply alarmed me: I began to apprehend he had heard and credited some of these false accusations, and eagerly begged of him to relieve my suspense.---‘ I am displeased, sister, that you have concealed Gertrude’s unpardonable and diabolical promulgations from me, who am the proper person to assert your innocence, and to vindicate your conduct, were that necessary. But your innocence is untainted; your conduct is unimpeachable; nor shall your reputation suffer from the aspersions of an invidious woman. Candour and implicit confidence, on your part, Adeline, would have spared

spared us both much uneasiness. Be not cast down: Gertrude has 'her recompence.—Against my advice,' continued he, 'she deposited her fortune in an opulent merchant's house, at higher interest than in the funds: remonstrances were ineffectual, for obstinacy is the companion of ignorance: she indulged her mercenary propensity: the man is now a bankrupt, and her ladyship left absolutely penniless.'

"This afflicting intelligence grieved me to the heart; my sister being married, and having five small children.—'What is to be done!--what will become of those helpless babes?' I cried; 'the pay of Monsieur d'Albetris cannot support them.'-----D'Albetris, her husband, was an officer in the Austrian service, whom my sister had imprudently received at her house, on a too familiar footing, and found it necessary to redeem her honour in the shackles of repentance by an immediate

mediate union.-----“ Alas !” I repeated,
 “ Monsieur d’Albetri cannot support
 them.---Oh ! Gertrude ! oh ! my deluded
 sister !”

“ Vivien’s generous heart bitterly lamented their distress ; and our united fortunes were very inadequate to admit of the diminution my sister’s embarrassed situation required, without bringing ourselves into similar circumstances. We consulted together what means were best to be adopted for the benefit of her family. My brother determined to let the sting of remorse canker upon the wound of disappointment, until she felt the extent of her own folly ; and we endeavoured to appear wholly unconcerned at her misfortune ; while we privately laid aside a small sum for her future use. Calamities of so severe a nature, undermined the little portion of fortitude she possessed.---Monsieur d’Albetri’s affection for his wife lessened as their distresses augmented.

augmented. Indeed I must, in justice, observe, though against my sister, that his home was no longer the abode of peace and happiness. Gertrude's natural acrimony of temper, now soured by disappointment, became a continual source of disquiet and repining, accompanied by cruel reproaches.---They were unable to keep sufficient servants to render them comfortable, and the poor little children were dirty and neglected, crying about the house.---Most men, you know, my dear madam, are miserable creatures in domestic adversity : they cannot endure the cares of a family, and gladly seek refuge elsewhere, to elude the bickerings of family anxieties. Hence Monsieur d'Albetri seldom visited his home : he resigned his pay, with our trifling donations towards the support of his little helpless family, and joined his regiment. My sister, left to herself, bereft of the company of the only person she still loved, could not support his absence with fortitude ;

titude ; her health yielded to the pressure
 of self deserving sorrow ; and she left five
 small children to bewail her loss, the
 eldest being then only six years old.—
 Her settled aversion to me never ceased
 until the hour of her death ; and I am
 strongly induced to believe through her
 instigations I lost the affections of a
 charming young nobleman who then vi-
 sited me, and from whom I daily expect-
 ed offers of marriage. He suddenly dis-
 appeared, where, when, or for what
 reason, I am yet to learn. It is now
 two years since my sister died : her two
 eldest girls, which are twins, live with
 me. Dear innocents ! their mother's er-
 rors shall never be revenged upon them
 by myself ; and their tender hearts were
 too young to have received any perma-
 nent corruption from her principles. As
 long as conveniently I can befriend
 them, I will ; and if there is any reliance
 upon that faithless creature man, I hope
 shortly to give them another protector.--

My

My present journey is to Amsterdam, under the most dreadful apprehensions, to attend the best of brothers, who is confined to his chamber, and wishes particularly to see me. This summons has doubtless nothing in it alarming; yet, from my knowledge of Vivien, I feel confident he would not send for me, were he not dangerously ill. The handwriting, alas! justifies my *presentiment*. I feel I am going to part for ever with my guardian, my only friend, and my dearest brother; and that too, at, perhaps, the most critical epoch of my life."

She ceased, and hastily covered her face with her handkerchief, while her full heart seemed ready to burst.---Matilda tried to sooth her sorrow, by every kind persuasion of hope; fondly assuring her that her fears might prove imaginary.—"Certainly, my dear madam," replied Adeline, "I am reprehensible to anticipate an evil which Heaven may avert;

avert; yet, when I believe it possible---and, alas, I fear too probable---so many things crowd upon my grateful memory, as to overwhelm me with despair."

The company from the cabin re-ascended, and eagerly enquired after the health of the invalids. An elderly lady joined the sick stranger, and ere they had time to pursue the thread of their narrative, to their great astonishment, they were informed that they would land in twenty minutes.

"To say," rejoined Matilda, "that I participate in your grief without expressing my anxiety, to hear it is alleviated by the indulgent hand of Providence, would be inconsistent with my own feelings. Believe me, my dear madam, you have awakened that interest in my heart, and made that impression on my friendship, that no time can obliterate.---
Without

landlord, they found, to their extreme dissatisfaction, that cold and comfortable as was the saloon, he could not accommodate them with a better, unless they would put up with a piece of furniture not altogether conformable to a sitting room, but most pleasingly agreeable after a long journey---a four-post bedstead---“ I assure you,” cried the host, “ I can shew your ladyship as elegant a two-bedded room, where you may sup, have any thing you please to command, and be as warm and snug as any prince of the realm.--The chamber is fit to receive the King of England, and its hangings of the very best yellow damask.”

“ Then,” replied Mrs. Evington, “ we will dispense with it as a supper-room, and hasten to it after that meal is over.”—“ What would you chuse for supper ?” enquired the host ; “ I can procure you any thing you please ; all the same to me, my lady.”—“ Send, us, then,” replied Mrs. Evington, “ a couple of boiled fowls,

fowls, and"---" Oh ! my lady, any thing but fowls—any thing else you please,--- but unfortunately there are none killed." —" Then suppose we have," said Mrs. Munster, " some minced veal ?"—" Veal ! veal ! oh ! *ma chère milady*—any thing but veal---at this time of the year, we are dreadfully pinched for that article---*terrible ! terrible !*—if there is any to be got in the town, it is at my house ; but now *malheureusement*, not an atom can be procured : any thing but veal---any thing else you please to mention."---" Give us a dish of mutton-chops," cried Mr. Evans.---" Mutton, my lord ! *cotelette de mouton !*---*Pardieu !* if you had been to-day at the *table d'hôte !*---Such a dish of *cotelette de mouton !*---to be sure as I gave them---*Ma foi*, it did one's heart good to look at them ! so well drest---served up, *my lord*, in such a stile !---I wish indeed I had them now, or had expected company, you should certainly have them---but those hungry gentlemen eat like wolves ; not

one is left, *Parbleu*!--and I have not a bit of mutton in the house---no! not so much as one of the bones of the finest dish of *cotelettes de mouton* that was ever seen on the king's own table!"—"What the devil can we have," cried Mr. Evans, "pray, Monsieur Vanté?"—"Any thing else you please, my lord, any joint or any part of an ox—I killed one this very morning—and I'll be bold to say a finer beast never came under the slaughterer's knife—what's more, I learnt of an English cook to dress beef-steaks *à l'Anglaise* in the first style—shall I dress a few, gentlemen?"

"Pretty kind of good cheer, Mr. EVERYTHING, consisting in tough beef," rejoined Mr. Evington; "perhaps you have eggs, cheese, bread?"—"O yes, my lord, and delightful sallad---such beef-steaks!--new laid eggs---and English cheese!"—"Then prepare us an omelette, some smoked beef, and a sallad, with all possible dispatch."

Monsieur

Monfieur Vanté difappeared, bowing and fcraping with as much confidence as if he was going to ferve up a Lord Mayor's feaft, though fomewhat difappointed that his Englifh guefts had not on their *entrées*, called for beef-fteads, a demand he had been accuftomed to, and refolved to fend them in as if forgetful whether ordered or not, becaufe it would make a material difference in the bill.

Mr. Evington determined to rife early the enfuing morning, and purchafe in the market fuch provifions as would better fuit the ladies, and indeed the whole party, then the 'EVERY THING,' of beef Monfieur Vanté could procure them, as they propofed ftaying here a few days, to furvey the town, which is large, and its environs remarkably pleafant.

CHAPTER IX.

Il silenzio é ancor facondo

E talor si spiega affai

Chi risponde col tacer.

METASTASIO.

MR. Evans complained of indisposition, and dreading an attack of the gout, he wished to proceed without further delay to Brussels. In this populous town, distinguished by its noble edifices, its small though picturesque park, the beautiful residence of the Archduke and Duchess, called the lake, displaying an enchanting union of elegance and magnificence, and where the eye is captivated with the view of the interior and exterior of this royal palace, and of concomitant objects extremely delightful.—In this popular town our travellers took up their residence at l'Hotel *de Belle Vue*, situate
in

in the "*Grand Place*," or rather the great square; one side of it overlooking the park. The indisposition of Mr. Evans induced them to propose lengthening their stay in this town, though in a state of hostile defence, and which as the season advanced, became daily more crowded with amusement and company. The great concourse of military rendered provisions of every sort exorbitantly dear. Yet this evil was, in some measure, compensated by the number of elegant men assembled on service, whose company greatly enlivened public places, and private societies. And as Mr. Evans' gout confined him at periods to the house, they congratulated themselves on being comfortable settled in a pleasant circle of acquaintance, which their letters of recommendation had largely procured them.

Near a month glided away, before they received letters from Osmond.—Mr. Evington had impatiently waited his son's

answer, which not arriving, he began to entertain some thoughts of crossing the water himself in quest of this dearly-beloved fugitive, and at length formed a resolution, which Mrs. Evington could not check, yet dreaded it being executed.—“If you leave us,” said the tender wife, “we are destitute of an adviser, and of an able guardian—we are four women, and shall be left unprotected; poor Mr. Evans’ disease renders him helpless; and should the French, as is not improbable, attack the town, what will become of us?”—“Your fears, my dear,” said Mr. Evington, “are imaginary: did I think it possible such an event should take place before my return, I would not only defer my journey, but quit Brussels directly.—If I am impatient to pursue my son, it arises from an apprehension that some accident has befallen him. Were I not thoroughly acquainted with the goodness of his heart, his filial duty, his just sense of religion, his veneration

ration for, and implicit confidence in the Almighty, I should be induced to attribute to wilful neglect, or to some less excusable cause, this extraordinary delay in writing to us, especially since our Emma's letters do not mention him.—“Oh, my husband!” rejoined Mrs. Evington, “do not stigmatize our beloved Osmond, by a thought so injurious to his principles: his noble spirit would indeed suffer death to promote Matilda's happiness:—for her sake, and for ours, he would endure every thing, but dishonour.—Neither impetuosity, despair, or jealousy could impel my son to render us miserable, and sully his posthumous reputation by a deed so foul. Oh! forbear the iniquitous suggestions. My Osmond! our son! guilty of suicide! forbid it, Heaven!—He who would not cruelly destroy the smallest of God's creatures! He who never wilfully offended his divine Maker in a reprobate thought; would he dare to present himself at the awful tribunal

of an Almighty Judge ! loaded with the most atrocious of all crimes !—oh ! never ! never !—Gracious God ! avert such a terrible thought from our son's imagination, lest his heart derive any guile from its pernicious influence—continue to bless him with thy grace ! imprint indelibly on his mind an abhorrence to the deadly act of violence, and teach him to bear with fortitude the afflictions of life, and to meet his dissolution in the way, and at the time, appointed by thy divine will !”

“ You mistake me,” said Mr. Evington, “ I do not accuse our son of this melancholy rashness ; I rather feel a confidence in the strength and purity of his principles. If, however, my dear love, he has resigned himself to despair, secluded himself from society, or is prevented from writing by a caprice, surely not excusable under present circumstances, our fears can only be removed by knowing the cause.—My advice, with his own good sense, will, I hope, prove efficacious.”

Mrs.

Mrs. Evington, perceiving her husband's mind bent on going to England, and labouring herself under some doubts, intreated to accompany him: a proposal he positively declined, for two powerful reasons; Mr. Evans' confinement, and the impropriety, attended with unkindness, of leaving Mrs. Munster and her fair charge. These motives were very sufficient, and Mrs. Evington acquiesced. The arrival of the next post without letters, effected the final decision. Mr. Evington took leave of his family and friends, and embarked for England.

The day succeeding Mr. Evington's departure, arrived one of the gentlemen whom Mr. Varennes had introduced at his house, by the name of Osnaburg, and who had been necessitated, by the arrival of extra-dispatches, to leave Bruges during the night, previous to Osmond's quitting that place. A note of apologies to Mr. Varennes accounted for their sudden

16

departure

departure, but which he had never particularly mentioned.-----He was now welcomed by Mrs. Evington, on delivering letters from Osmond to his father, mother, and sister, which created mutual joy and sorrow, as it appeared from their contents that Mr. Evington would not meet with him; the purport of these letters being solely to plead the necessity of the step he had taken, and expressive of anxiety to gain their concurrence to its adoption. Being already promised a lieutenancy, and had every prospect of getting promotion, for which he begged leave to draw upon his father from eight hundred to a thousand pounds.

Maria's letters being explicit, and fully accounting for his tedious silence, we shall give them at large to our readers.

“ Ostend, March 15th.

“ My dear Maria,

*“ Here is your unfortunate brother, seated in a large lonely room, gloomy as are
his*

his own thoughts---God! what a ride has been mine from Bruges!--My mind distracted, my heart suffering the tortures of an ill-requited passion for a lovely and amiable woman. This, Maria, is the soul-rending pang, to know the object meritoriously deserving the love she inspires.---A woman, vain and giddy, may enflame our affections by her beauty and her charms, but she seldom so infatuates our senses as to leave it out of our power to disentangle ourselves.

“ To aggravate my sorrow, the two *dog borjes*, poor creatures, were quite knocked up before we had measured half way— Was not this provoking? Cruelly so to one who wished to have been borne on the wings of an eagle, to hurry himself from the pungency of intrusive memory; instead of which I was compelled to sit patiently, going a foots pace for near ten miles. I promised the postillion a recompence proportionate to the swiftness of his progress, to gain which the poor boy

boy---merciless as myself,---goaded the sides of the wretched worn-out animals, with whip and spur, to no purpose ; for the strength of these beasts was exhausted. The post-boy certainly believed me (what I nearly am), not a little crazy ; for desiring him, after repeated injunctions to the contrary, to let them take their leisure. Fearful of losing his bribe, he continued to enforce his discipline, till at length I promised to double the reward, provided he disused his unavailing whip. The poor lad, who really loved his horses, gave me an abundance of thanks for my compassion as he called it, and what is remarkable for a Brabanter, refused the second recompence on condition I would indulge him with the first, alleging his wish to serve me even against impossibilities, and begged permission to water and refresh his horses twice extraordinary on the road.

“This good fellow’s sensibility towards these poor dumb slaves, gained him my
good-

good-will ; nay, he darted a ray of pleasure in my breast, impenetrable as I believed it to such sensations---I owed him gratitude for so doing. and to his astonishment, when I alighted at Ostend, I gave him a ducat, seriously enjoining him to take care of the wearied animals, who had earned him the present.---The amazed boy turned the piece of money several times round in his fingers,—looked at it—then at me---and bashfully asked, if I knew the value of the piece I gave him? ---‘ it is worth,’ said the boy, ‘ seven florins in this country, *milord*,—for they title every Englishman here :’ this proof of his honesty and goodness of heart, Maria may believe, would have ensured him the ducat, had it been treble the value—‘ And what will you do with it?’ said I, observing his face beam with delight as he gazed upon the little glittering piece in his hand. ‘ I shall not keep it, *milord*, for my own use ; though I want to buy a few clothes.’—‘ Then to whom will

will you give it ?'—The boy blushed exceedingly, hesitated, and muttered in a low voice, 'that it would do a deal of good.'—I repeated my interrogation.—'To *Colette Franchise, milord*,' ejaculated the lad, scarce intelligibly, his eyes cast on the ground.'——'Who is *Colette Franchise* ?'—'A poor orphan, *milord*, with four little sisters to maintain.'—'How old is she ?'—'To day seventeen, *milord*,' 'Is she a relation, or your destined wife ?'—'No, *milord* ; her hand was promised before her father died to a young sailor, who is gone a long way off.'—'How old are her sisters ?'—'Ninette, *milord*, is sixteen, and works at a weaver's ; Fanchette is eight, and goes a-weeding ; Marguerite is seven, and helps her ; Manon is five, and little Rose only three.'—'Which is your favourite ? speak, my good boy.'—'Ninette, *milord* !'—He hung his head quite on his bosom, turning round his hat.—'We are too young to marry, *milord*, so we put our daily earnings together

ther to support the good Colette. She's a hard task of it, *milord*, sometimes : and we mean to wait till Pierre Roublanc returns from sea to marry Colette ; then we can each take two of the little girls under our care.'—The good boy hid his face with his hand, as if ashamed of this truly virtuous confession.—I borrowed six ducats of Morice, my landlord, and sent them to the poor little Collette and her sisters, after having enquired into the truth of this story.---Morice told me there was a family of orphans bearing that name, who were remarked for their quietness, cleanliness, and honesty ; but he knew nothing of my noble-hearted little post-boy.

“ I have related this trifling incident, because I know my dear sister's feelings are congenial with my own. I have drawn upon Mr. Varennes for five pounds ; advise him of this liberty ; and in case my father in displeasure should refuse my draft upon Mr. Varennes, you,

Maria,

Maria, who are *rich*, must become my banker.

“ At five to-morrow we sail. I do not regret losing the evening tide since my little post-boy and Colette Franchise are the gainers.---It strikes two—Good-night, Maria!—Sleep, joy, peace and happiness, which have fled from your unhappy brother, light upon his beloved sister !”

“ *Plymouth, 18th March.*

“ After having undergone a variety of perils, and being nearly famished for want of wood, we have made Plymouth harbour under the most alarming distress of weather; our vessel is in a deplorable condition. These last three days, every hand has been employed in working the pumps. One passenger died on the voyage.—What an awful scene, Maria, has your brother witnessed, it defies all description! Becalmed in our passage, and a thick fog intercepting the lights off the shore, we were compelled to keep
out

out at sea. The next morning, as the black mist dissipated, we discerned an enemy's vessel bearing hard upon us---the wind sat directly off the land. Unable to make any resistance, we gave her a chase, the wind on our stern: fortunately we escaped from our enemy, which proved to be a privateer; but in accomplishing this, we were compelled to steer considerably out of our course. Towards evening, the weather thickening, with a rising wind, the captain judged it prudent to keep out at sea.--Early in the morning the gale blew fresher---the dark clouds rolled over our heads, gathering with impending fury.--The waves visibly encreased, and foaming high, rolled impetuously. The whole atmosphere mantling the wide ocean, assumed a livid aspect---the dreary elements, in awful grandeur, every where indicated the rapid approach of a tremendous storm. The wind blew hard upon the Belgic shore; we lowered all sail, and silently prepared

prepared to receive the tremendous stroke. The Captain also kept a profound silence, interrupted only by the shrill whistle now and then of the hardened sailor: such hands as were absolutely necessary were lashed on deck. Fortunately these wise preparations empowered us to weather the storm, which raged with unabating violence the remainder of the day; we expected every instant the vessel to sink: the brave exertions of the sailors, aided by some of the passengers, kept the packet above water. Employed in this fatiguing exercise, and relieving each other, we passed the whole night. The provisions and water being nearly exhausted, we were put upon a very slender allowance, little more than a tea-cup of beer or water and about an ounce of victuals at a time. With renovating hope we beheld the dawn of the next day open upon us with serenity; and the turbulence of the waves, though still swelling mountains high, was considerably abated. We believed ourselves

near

near Plymouth Sound, and steered in consequence, but we had so little wind that we could not make the harbour that night: our disappointment can be better imagined than described, for words are poor interpreters to express the agonies of mind and body we then laboured under. The pumps were obliged to be kept constantly working, from the vessel having sprung a leak, by which she filled faster than we emptied her—our mast and rigging were considerably damaged, and in this lamentable condition we passed the third wretched night, tossing upon the ocean in hopeless terror.

“ Oh! Maria! how often has your brother ventured to implore his immediate death, but how tremendous is its approach! even with every thought and every hope in life blasted, I beheld the threatening wreck with horror—I felt the audacity of the invocations I had often made to heaven; and reflected with contrition

trition how few men estimate life according to its proper value: and how benevolent is Providence in rendering inefficacious our warmest wishes!—I condemned my temerity, and faithfully promised, if we escaped the dangers we rode upon, more circumspectly to govern my thoughts in future.—Maria, I even resolved to *marry*—yes, *marry*—since I cannot live for myself, I will for others!—The beloved name of Matilda must ever remain indelibly engraved on my heart—her image must ever be constantly before me, and her voice will perpetually vibrate on my ear! yet my determination is to marry.—Methinks I hear you exclaim, ‘*Osmond you rave!*’ reason has forsaken you. Honour forbids your espousing another woman, while your affections are betrothed to Matilda.’—Hear me, Maria! if I swerve from the dictates of that honour I hold dear as life, despise your brother.—I propose to marry—to take some young woman, who may favour me with a preference,

ference, and in whose affections I may confide. This done, my attentions shall be redoubled, as I perceive them agreeable. My fancy shall paint her resemblance to Matilda; and I will obtain her hand in despite to my heart, which must remain with its idol.—My every thought, my whole life, shall be directed to my wife's happiness. The education of our children will afford new and extensive sources of employment.---

“ Our babes shall richest comforts bring,
 If tutor'd right they'll prove a spring
 Whence pleasure's ever rise;
 We'll form their minds with studious care
 To all that's manly good and fair,
 And train them for the skies.”

Contentment shall incessantly dwell under our roof.---Woman has not an ungrateful heart; and when she perceives that her comfort and her felicity are my sole pursuit, she will not regret the loss of what she never possessed---my heart. Under this connection, I must escape those dangerous

dangerous quicksands our sex invariably wreck upon,---folly, libertinism, and dissipation.

“ Forgive, dear Maria, this intrusive digression, which has imperceptibly traversed the original purport of my letter. ---To return: suffice it to say, that Providence preserved our lives and our vessel. Early on the third morning, we made Plymouth harbour, and landed about three o'clock yesterday afternoon.—Tomorrow, if my strength will permit, I intend continuing my journey.—Inclosed is the letter I wrote at Ostend: owing to the unsettled state of my mind I put it into my portmanteau, instead of giving it to the waiter. Forgive this acknowledged negligence, in an unwilful omission!—Apprehensive you may be uneasy on my account, I have dispatched a few lines by a vessel which is going to Ostend.”

* * * * *

“ Saturday.

“ *Saturday.*

“ SINCE I last addressed my dear sister, I have been confined to my bed for ten days, with a broken arm and a fever, occasioned by a fall off a *vile* post-horse. The fatigue of body and mind I experienced in my late passage from Ostend, created some fever, of which I am now, thank God, perfectly recovered. My right hand still refuses to transcribe my thoughts; nevertheless the bone is cementing, and I expect to use my arm next week. Fortunately my left hand imperfectly supplies the loss, but unused to the employment, its progress is very incorrect, and tiresomely slow. Lieutenant Hamilton, who supped with us at Mr. Varennes’ is perfectly acquainted with our sister Emma. His kindness and attentions to me are boundless, and his company very desirable. A degree of melancholy hangs upon his brow, and mingles with his conversation, congenial to my own feelings.

" THIS morning, Maria, your brother has purchased a lieutenancy for five hundred and fifty pounds—auspicious smiles attend this deed!—I shall not join my regiment until the beginning of next month.—Tell me, what says my dear—Mine!—Vain illusion!—No! tell me what says *your* friend, Matilda?—*once the joy, and, ah!* for ever the idol of my heart!

" Hamilton's encreased despondency alarms me: he is absent, thoughtful, and shuns even my presence.—The carriage is, at length, ordered—I leave Plymouth to-morrow—Hamilton promises to accompany me part, if not the whole, of the way. Meanwhile, dear girl, adieu!—For God's sake, do not let my father protest my note on his banker!

- - - - -

" THE Fates, I believe, protract my quitting this detested town: here I am still; tied in the bondage of gratitude, of friendship, and of compassion!—Yesterday morning the post-chaise came to the door:

door: I expected every instant Hamilton would enter my room, as we were to breakfast together. Impatient that he came not, I entered his chamber, where a note lay on the table, to my address, excusing himself from breakfast, alleging, 'he was compelled to join his ship, wished me a pleasant journey, and brighter prospects through this world of wretchedness, with a longer continuance in it than that to which he was destined.'

" Judge, Maria, the uneasiness these lines created. I sent for the waiter; enquired whither Mr. Hamilton had directed his steps? The man replied 'he knew not; but that the gentleman had left two letters to be put into the post-office as soon as you, sir, were gone.'—I desired him to fetch them. They redoubled my surprise; one being directed to myself, the other to Lady Beaufort. I dismissed the servant: the seal instantly yielded to my impatience.—I transcribe the contents :

‘ *Dear Evington,*—

‘ Before you peruse these lines, guard your generous heart from pitying him who has only emancipated from misery to regions, I will hope, of eternal tranquillity.—Often have we conversed upon the act of suicide: like yourself, I abhorred the deed; like you, I considered the crime heinous; like you, I depicted the guilt in its darkest colours;—would to heaven that, like you, I had courage to shun the deadly weapon!—Ten years I have ploughed the boisterous waves, and welcomed the fiercest storms that ever rolled along the atmosphere: heat, cold, wind, or tempest, never yet clouded my brow.—The loss of friends, of friendship, even love, hopeless love! I have hitherto surmounted with fortitude;—but, Osmond, when the mind is overpowered by complex vicissitudes, when it is surcharged by the oppression of irremediable grievances, it must be relieved, or we sink into the abyss of lunatic despair; it must become

come hypochondriac, or vent the overflowing of its maddened brain in flight so far beyond natural precincts, that we soon fall to a state more deplorable than one afflicted with the *hydrophobia*.—To sustain this encreasing evil, surpasses my slender philosophy.—One alternative— one only remains, that must, is, shall, will be mine---blame me---brand me---banish me from your esteem---I deserve it---yet, do I deprecate myself for grasping that alternative? No! I must, imploring heavenly mercy! and dare it headlong.— Can I survive that honour, which is fled? my life's blood must retrieve it---Already it is pledged to the loveliest of her sex. Destitute of fortune, as we both are, my honour forfeited, shall I bring shame and poverty upon her my heart idolizes? No! though death, though suicide, though destruction wore an aspect still more tremendous, I would fearlessly encounter it. When she learns that my dissolution is certain, it will call forth the tributary tear

from her precious eyes; too cheaply bought—had I ten lives, and each life's attribute were replete with joy in lieu of one of misery, they should all be devoted to save her an imaginary pain!—Judge then, my friend, if I grieve to aggravate that pang I know she suffers in my absence: dear amiable girl! it were better to shed the tear for an unfortunate departed lover, than heave the unavailing sigh for a disgraced husband!

“ The one (e'er this reaches you, my friend), I shall, I must, I will claim: why were cards ever invented?—rash, inconsiderate fool! what had I do with cards? Fortune had only just smiled upon me, as you are aware of, with ten thousand pounds in her hands! Osmond—I have—gracious God! yes, I have squandered it *all*! Mad with revenge, though a novice in the cursed game, I last night doubled the sum, and I am ruined—everlastingly ruined! My friends are ignorant of my misfortune;

fortune; happily they will remain so until my eternal exit. Wine, treachery, fraud, artifice, attended this pillage; but what avails? The deed is done! Never may a conscience goaded like mine invade my friend's tranquillity! let him who deserves your pity, while he extorts your censure, prove an hapless example of a deluded gambler! Your amiable sister, Lady Beaufort will disclose the remainder of my wretched heart, torn asunder by love, desperation, and remorse. Adieu! Oh God! oh God! what a tremendous situation—what a farewell—what a wretched being is

‘ WILLIAM HAMILTON !’

“ A few moments sufficed to comprehend the contents of the foregoing letter, and fully convinced me that every moment was preciously important; I hastened towards the quay, where I found a boat had then landed some of the gentlemen from Hamilton's vessel with himself; but as this intelligence augmented rather

than appeased my apprehensions, I pursued my rash friend in those paths I knew the least frequented and not unknown to him. Fortune directed my steps—I discovered him with the pistol uplifted, and on the point of drawing the trigger; the distance precluded my seizing his arm: I trusted to the efficacy of words, and called out in a loud voice,—‘Forbear, Hamilton! for God’s sake forbear!’—he started, and the sudden emotion which my well-known voice occasioned, made him involuntarily drop his arm, not however disinclined to perpetrate his intention; the piece went off—my friend fell stretched upon the ground ere I could reach him. The report of the pistol seemed as if it had severed my heart; I even accused myself of having expedited his death, and breathless approached the spot where he lay. I perceived with renovating hope that he lived, though much wounded; the ball entered just above his collar-bone and

and lodged in his shoulder, and the fall had stunned him, which trance at first alarmed me: putting both his pistols into my pocket, I went in search of assistance, and had him conveyed to the inn as quietly as possible, where a surgeon dressed his wounds, and assured me they were not dangerous.

“ I have now the satisfaction to confirm his opinion, and further to add, that I believe Hamilton feels so forcibly at present the sinful cowardice of the act, that he promises faithfully no evil shall henceforward ever induce him to attempt a similar crime. Notwithstanding these improprieties, I am charmed, Maria, with this amiable young man.; his heart glows with generosity, he abounds in excellent qualities, his mind is noble and well cultivated, indeed I am strongly attached to him, and regret that his heart is pre-engaged, otherwise Hamilton is the man I should wish to call brother.

“ This day three weeks I quitted Bruges—quitted—away memory! painful sweet, mixed with bitters! fond illusion—harbinger of agony and pleasure! seek, seek thy habitation in lighter minds than mine; rest with Maria—recal her brother's sorrows to her imagination—bear his affection unchanged to her charming friend: retrace those happy hours, never to return again! revive in her recollection those tranquil scenes of exquisite delight we spent together; but chace from her bosom every thought encircled with the faintest ray of care! do this, thou combination of faith and treachery! but leave for ever

“ OSMOND EVINGTON.”

“ *Thursday.*

“ Hamilton is so much recovered that I purpose leaving Plymouth to-morrow. Captain Osnaburgh obligingly charges himself with this extensive packet: I need
not

not recommend him, his address bespeaks what he really is, a man of family and fashion—and the real gentleman—you know my opinion of the words *real* gentleman. Adieu!”

CHAPTER X.

“ ————— Oh! controul,
 Subdue by force the rebel in my soul :
 Thou who can’st still the raging of the flood,
 Restrain the various tumults of my blood.
 Teach me with equal firmness to sustain,
 Alluring pleasure and assaulting pain.”

YOUNG.

THESE letters were as a balsamic cordial to the spirits of the affectionate mother, who now began to persuade herself that Mr. Evington’s absence would be of short duration. Pleasure diffused its chearful influence on every face, save that of Matilda, yet her’s was not unferene, for she too sincerely participated in the satisfactory relief from suspense her friends had received. Osmond had written without enclosing a line to herself; this pointed inattention, bordering upon disrespect, keenly wounded her feelings, which, from
 her

her father's ill state of health, were rendered more exquisitely susceptible. Her colour came and went perpetually during Captain Osnaburgh's recital of the noble conduct which Osmond evinced towards young Hamilton; a thousand questions in rapid succession were demanded by all, except Matilda—Matilda alone was silent! she heard with pleasure their answers, yet felt ashamed, confused, and distressed with her inability to express that concern for his happiness which her heart inwardly acknowledged.

To have spoken of Osmond with indifference was impossible, and pride forbade the exposing her real sentiments of anxiety for a young man, who, as she believed, had quitted her the moment she confessed his ascendancy over her heart, even without apology, and had now convinced her that he meant personally to offend her, by a gross and decided negligence.— Yet such behaviour so ill corresponded with

with the leading traits of his character, that while her heart mourned this sudden change, it sought to discover some action in her own conduct deserving of censure, whereby she might exculpate him: none however presented itself, or none deserving so severe a punishment, and in silence she suffered the painful uncertainty to develope itself.

Mrs Munster beheld her sweet charge evidently droop: with concern she now perceived Osmond had entwined himself round her heart more effectually than she hitherto supposed. That he ever passionately loved Matilda, the early companion of his days, admitted not of doubt, and every subsequent incident as far as it concerned himself with Matilda, justified the confirmation of this attachment being permanent, until the hour of his departure from Bruges; an incongruity in his conduct, situated as he was with Miss Evans, which annihilated at once the
settled

fettled opinion of years. It was Mrs. Munster's wish to have consulted with her friend Mrs. Evington, yet she could not do this without portraying Osmond in an unfavourable light, nor receive her advice without deeply wounding her feelings : added to which, it seemed evident, from Mrs. Evington's silence on the subject, that she sedulously avoided entering into any explanation on a subject which heretofore had been the constant theme of their conferences ; she seemed even cautious of coupling their names in the same breath. Mrs. Munster perceiving this unusual observance, attributed it to private motives, and, influenced by similar delicacy, she had as carefully excluded the topic from their conversations.

Thus situated, she now tenderly addressed Matilda : " My dearest girl, your altered countenance, your spirits so conspicuously forced to appear chearful, exceedingly distress me ; something preys
upon

upon your mind, which you conceal from me: your excellent father's declining health will severely suffer if unfortunately he observes his darling comforter yielding to the dangerous malady of secret sorrow. Unbosom whatever afflicts you to your tenderest of friends—to her who will sympathize with Matilda, and share her grief: do, love, relieve my anxiety and relieve your own. I am no stranger to sorrow; recollect, Matilda, whether I am unschooled in the fluctuations of the heart: alas! can I forget the irreparable loss of an only child—a darling son? lost to me in a manner far more irreconcilable than by death itself, for then he had received my latest attendance: I should have had the sorrowful consolation of depositing his dear remains in our universal bed, satisfied that I consigned his guileless soul to the care of angels, nor have dared to repine at the will of heaven. Instead of which, he may at this moment be a miserable wanderer, homeless,

homeless, friendless, at all events fortuneless ! perhaps fallen a victim to cold neglect and death. Alas ! think, my love, of these afflicting trials, and acknowledge that I am no stranger to care. How often does my heart inly bleed for his fate ! left, dear boy, from absolute want, from bad education, and probably destitute of the necessaries of life, his little innocent heart may have been seduced into the paths of dishonour !” The tears stole down her cheek, and the deep-fetched sigh affirmed the sincerity of her grief. Matilda’s eyes were bedewed with sympathy, while her responsive breast re-echoed the unavailing sigh ; she rose from her chair, and embracing Mrs. Münster, pressed her hand to her bosom, and in silent eloquence conveyed more than volumes could impart.

“ Dearest, best of friends,” exclaimed Matilda, “ accuse me not of reserve ; I have no wish to disguise my inmost thoughts

thoughts from you. I confess I am not happy, nay, can I be so while my poor dear father's health hourly impairs? Can I look forward to his invaluable loss, and not anticipate its bitterness?—Ah! no, impossible!”

Her anguish was too great to permit her to proceed: her face was deluged with filial tears.—“ Can I, my dear madam,” continued Matilda, when she had recovered herself, “ unmoved feel Mr. Osmond Evington's pointed disrespect, after his professions of attachment and affection?—alas! no; your Matilda's stoicism is indeed inadequate to the causeless trial: and, though I must condemn his unaccountable proceedings, I cannot help admiring him. Nevertheless, till he assigns sufficient reason, and sufficient in *my* opinion, to authorize this seeming inconsistency, I will teach my heart to forget its predilections in his favour, and only remember his having once been amiable.”

Satisfied

Satisfied with the candour of her reply, Mrs. Munster affectionately endeavoured to mitigate her uneasiness respecting her father, and to fortify her mind against the evils of that disappointment which she imagined it would be her lot to experience. Matilda listened to her words, but they had no efficacy on her heart. A summons to Mr. Evans' chamber here ended their conversation. She flew to this indulgent parent, wiping away every trace of sorrow, and, assuming a chearful mien, impatiently enquired his wishes?

His palid countenance alarmed her;—unconscious that he observed her's, she involuntarily receded a few steps, to wipe away with the back of her hand the ready obtruding testimony of fear, while her heart almost sunk within her.—“ I sent for thee, sweet girl,” said Mr. Evans, “ not to alarm thy gentle bosom, but to advise with thee: I am not worse, my angel, I am only a little fatigued.”

fatigued." Matilda's spirits revived—she kissed her father's forehead and sat upon his footstool, laying both her beautiful arms on his knees:—"You rejoice my soul, dear sir, for your looks were indifferent; you wanted your little nurse to enliven your spirits."

"I have, my darling, been occupied in a painful employment, yet a very necessary one; I have been making my testament. To you, love, all I possess will devolve—nay, dearest, weep not—there is nothing awful in a will—it is what we should always have by us, lest any accident befall us. And now, my amiable and beloved child, dry your tears and hear me:—I have beheld with sorrow your fretting of late; I have never expressed a wish to see you married to any one while I live—to enjoy your company is all my comfort: but, as my health is very precarious, ere it is further impaired, I should like to know the situation of my child's heart respecting young Osmond?"

Matilda

Matilda blushed deeply—already extremely pained by her father's conversation upon his own probable dissolution, she was now scarce proof against this unexpected enquiry : she paused, she hesitated, and wept alternately : not a word escaped her lips—she condemned her silence, yet her agitation rendered her unable to utter a syllable.

“ Do not, Matilda, give way to this soul-rending affliction—I mean not to distress you, though you do me.”

“ Forgive me, dear sir ; I am unworthy your kindness—indeed my spirits are uncommonly flurried—I believe, before Osmond left us, I preferred him to any person of my acquaintance.”

“ Are then your sentiments changed in his absence ?”

Again she paused, not knowing how to reply, well aware that if she avowed the truth, her father's disposition would ill
submit

submit to the mere shadow of disrespect offered to himself or his family.

“ Have you seen any other person more fortunate ? ”

“ None, sir ; none ! ”

“ Do you think he would render you happy, were he your husband ? ”

“ Y—es I do, sir. ”

“ And has he never told you the same, were you his wife ? ”

Another cruel embarrassment followed this question—to deceive the best of parents, who was sick, and possibly verging on the grave, seemed ungrateful and inhuman ; nor could she think of giving cause of anger to him, whose warmth of temper blazed out on the slightest friction, and, however momentary, might be of dangerous consequence. Therefore to avoid any word that might excite his displeasure towards Osmond,

she

she suffered the whole blame to rest on herself.

“ He has repeatedly, sir, indirectly given me to understand as much ; I believe the---the---little attention---I---I---gave to those intimations, prompted him to essay the force of absence. I am really sorry he had recourse to that expedient, as the loss of his society is a great privation to us all.”

Considerably relieved after this confession, which she delivered in an imperfect manner, she waited for, yet dreaded, his further questioning her. This fond father, eager to wipe away the confusion he had occasioned, dispelled her fears, by hastily returning : “ Enough ! dearest girl, enough ! --I wish not further to torment your over-tenacious feelings ; I will spare your delicacy the confession of your sentiments. Poor boy ! I knew he adored my child : I will write and bring him to her
on

on the wings of love, and tell him he is equally dear to her father as herself."

Ring the bell, he requested a writing-desk to be brought instantly, against every remonstrance of Matilda's; vainly did she entreat him only to defer the letter until his strength admitted of such an exertion. "Pho! pho! what avails delaying a young man's felicity for a few moments' trouble," cried Mr. Evans, ever delighted to promote felicity; "I will write, love, and he shall help to nurse your poor father with his darling girl."—The words were said, and to have them retracted appeared impossible. She was now compelled to hear her father dictate, word by word, for he would not suffer her to leave the apartment, the following letter:

"Brussels,

“ *Brussels, Hotel de Belle Vue.*

“ *Dear Osmond,*

“ *You are a rash fellow!—you don’t deserve your happiness!*”—‘ Will that do, Tilda?’

‘ Doubtless, sir.’—“ *I have been and am indisposed—come to me—Matilda wants a helper.*” Here her heart failed; and, when

he again appealed for her approbation, she begged him to omit that she wanted his assistance: ‘ I assure you, sir—really,

dear sir, I want none—it would deprive me of half my prerogative; my dear father, do not, pray.’ Mr. Evans continued---

“ *Though she denies it, you are the chosen of her heart!*”—‘ Oh! dear, dear sir, there’s no occasion to write word so;

pray, pray.’—‘ What? bid him make haste?’—‘ Oh! no, no; indeed, sir.’—

“ *She is sitting by me praying, but I don’t mind her---as for you, you are a d—d lucky dog, though I say it.*” ‘ My dear father,

what are you writing? what luck is there? besides, you know he---he---you---you had

better wait, sir; pray do.'—" *You may be sure of receiving my consent to what my daughter wishes: respecting my opinion of her choice, I believe you to be as good as are most young heads, but not without faults. Come and claim your prize!*"—" Suffer me, my dear sir, to beg you will not be so precipitate—I entreat you, dear, dear, sir!"—" *Your prize! I repeat, though her father, she's an inestimable jewel!*"—" How can you write so inconsistently, sir?" " *Adieu! haste hither, Osmond. You will see that my hand trembles too much to write accurately.*

" *Your's faithfully,*

" B. EVANS."

" *Enclosed is a draft for one thousand pounds to pay for your commission.*"

" A pretty fuss about nothing at all! this is always the case with you little minxes: sooner than acknowledge your sentiments you would make yourselves wretched, and drive a man mad as a

March

March hare ; and now, dear love, I will go to bed."

Matilda retired under very unpleasant sensations, resolved to consult with Mrs. Munster what steps were most adviseable to counteract this letter—whether to intercept it, or suffer it to take its course. The result of the consultation proved to be equally perplexing ; Mrs. Munster being of opinion that Mr. Evans must be either undeceived, or they must permit the letter to reach Osmond. Matilda allowed the propriety of this alternative ; and, averse to detaining one of her father's letters, with extreme reluctance, she permitted the important letter to be dispatched.

About ten o'clock, a servant entered the supper-room ; his face denoted the purport of his message : Matilda, ever on the watch, and always apprehensive of a redoubled attack of the disorder upon her

beloved parent, ejaculated, with an impatient and tremulous voice, " Peter! what is the matter? for God's sake speak: Peter, is my father worse?"—The man looked at her with a sort of convulsive terror, but answered in the negative; then calling Mrs. Munster aside, she quitted the room: to her Peter communicated his sad intelligence, " Ah! madam, madam, my poor master—is—dead!"—Mrs. Munster, unable to controul her feelings on receiving so unexpected a shock—Mr. Evans dead! who a few hours since seemed so infinitely better, struck her to the heart—she screamed aloud, the blood fled from her cheek, she fainted and sunk senseless on the staircase. The shriek attending her fall instantly called Matilda from the table; little expecting, however, to find her more than mother stretched lifeless at her feet! Peter, in amaze, had just presence of mind enough to support her head.

" Oh!

“ Oh ! heavens, Peter ! ” cried Matilda, “ what does this mean ? do not screen the fatal truth ; tell me, tell me all ! ” Mrs. Evington and Maria by this time were now beside Mrs. Munster. Matilda, impatient of satisfaction, had flown to her father’s chamber, where, approaching the bedside, she beheld, with inexpressible agony, that the beloved features of the best of fathers were swelled and convulsed. He lay stretched, speechless in his bed ! In frantic despair she called upon his name—kissed his cheek and lips, which, parched and burning, were unfelt by the fever which already flushed her countenance, and dried up every avenue which so lately had welcomed a flood of tears. In this state, she was kneeling by her father, when Mrs. Evington (having learnt the mournful message), came in quest of this afflicted daughter ;—as she drew near the inauspicious bed—“ Come, my sweet girl,” said Mrs. Evington,—“ you must come with me.”

Matilda grasped the bed clothes, and turning round with a wild enthusiasm in her eyes, as they almost darted from her head, cried with a deep groan :—" Oh ! my father ! my fond, dear, best of fathers ! no—I will never, never leave him—I will not—I cannot indeed, madam." She grasped a stronger hold of the sheets ; Mrs. Evington felt greatly affected at her situation, so evidently upon the verge of frenzy : she summoned all her own fortitude at so momentous a crisis, yet dreaded to have recourse to violence, lest it should put Matilda's little remaining reason to flight ; she wept bitterly, and, with the tenderest compassion, implored her to leave the bedside.

" Consider, my love, your best friend, Mrs. Munster, is in a melancholy situation ; she requires your immediate attendance. Can you refuse her call ?—Matilda ! dear girl, Mrs. Munster calls you !"

At

At the name of Munster she started, gazed wildly round the room, earnestly fixing on Mrs. Evington's face, and still seizing the counterpane with the gripe of frenzy, she responded sorrowfully, as reason emitted new light on her fluctuating mind: "Forbear to say *she* is dead—she lives; but my poor dear, dear father here is gone! he is dead!—gone, gone for ever!—you would not have me leave him, who so tenderly loved me while living? Ah! my dear madam, leave me! leave me! leave me!"—again her imagination wandered. The arrival of the physician, with other attendants, roused the unhappy sufferer from her suppliant posture: "My dear young lady," said the physician, desirous of removing her from the patient, "consider, Miss Evans, you have other calls; duty is foremost, I grant, yet compassion has some claims upon you: do, pray, my amiable young lady, retire with Mrs. Evington, while I see whether your father is recoverable."

Matilda, during this supplication, more strenuously clung to the bed ; hiding her burning head in its coverlid. The physician then forcibly raised the afflicted mourner from her position, and gently resigned her to the protection of Mrs. Evington ; who, with Peter, led her trembling frame to an adjacent apartment.

The physician meanwhile examined his patient, who he found had been attacked by an apoplectic fit. After having bled him, and administered the usual remedies, he had shortly the satisfaction to see propitious signs of life ; he then repaired to the other invalids, and acquainted Mrs. Munster, as she revived, that Mr. Evans still lived ; an intelligence so grateful failed not to restore her fleeting senses to their accustomed equanimity. To Matilda his attentions were next proffered ; a burning fever already raged through her veins, and the doctor expressed himself doubtful of her recovery, her situation being

being pregnant with dangerous symptoms: he desired to have blisters applied to her feet, and provided they drew quickly they might entertain hopes, and with the vigour of a youthful constitution subdue the disease.

Mrs. Evington was the unceasing attendant of her bedside, but as Mr. Evans grew better, he became more solicitous to embrace his beloved daughter.

Mrs. Munster endeavoured to pacify him, by saying she was indisposed, or by some evasive answer, which satisfied his impatience for a few hours; towards evening he grew uneasy that she came not:—“ Ah! my estimable friend,” said he, “ you would deceive me—my child is ill, *very* ill, or she would, ere now, have been with her doating father—mere indisposition would not detain my sweet Matilda a whole day from my apartment! tell me, I conjure you, what ails my darling?”

Mrs. Munster re-assured him that Matilda's illness proceeded from an indigestion of stewed parsnips, a vegetable to which he knew she was very partial, and which in reality usually disagreed with her. Since the cause of her illness was assigned, and Mrs. Munster spoke of it with seeming unconcern, the fond father endeavoured to believe it true.

At this important period arrived young Melcourt, returning from one house of mourning and finding another in nearly the same state. His presence, however, was kindly welcomed by the gentle Maria; she flew to him, and, with a tender reproof, chided his long absence: her soft eyes beamed with rapture as they sought a sweet return in those of her lover's, but they found it not—he coolly pressed her hand to his lips, while in the same breath, his eyes and words emphatically enquired for Matilda. Maria's partiality for her friend never suffered a jealous surmise to enter
her

her mind ; and unfortunately she was too seriously attached to Melcourt to discern any indifference towards herself; she therefore replied, with sympathizing distress, “ I wish I could, my dear Melcourt, give you a satisfactory answer—my dearest friend is dangerously ill—confined to her bed—alas! you are come to a sick house.” Melcourt changed colour, he sighed deeply, and kept a provoking silence.—“ You speak not, Melcourt—are you not happy to see me ?”

Melcourt felt the justness of the reproof, and answered with a constrained smile:—“ Doubtless I am, lovely Maria ; but I am grieved to learn your distress—I should long since have been here, had not my old aunt made us apprehend she meant to disappoint all our expectations, by making another *entrée* in the world. The old lady got so much better for about a fortnight, that I proposed departing in despair, most devilishly provoked to have taken

the journey for nothing; however her ladyship prevented my leaving her, by soon afterwards making her exit, and, to dry my tears, bequeathed me two thousand pounds ready shiners—her estates are entailed, and necessarily devolve to the next male heir.”

Maria received this excuse with a smile, acknowledging that the legacy was worth the attendance which had obtained it.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Soudain la vérité —————

Toujours chère aux humains, mais souvent inconnue,

————— descends du haut des cieux

De moment en moment, les ombres qui la couvrent :

Cèdent à la clarté des feux qui les entr’ouvrent

Bientôt elle se montre à ses yeux

Brillante d’un éclat qui n’éblouit jamais.”

“ LA HENRIADE DE VOLTAIRE.”

OSMOND, conformable to his intention, quitted Plymouth, and repaired to London, just in time to welcome a young stranger’s entrance into the world, and for whom Lady Beaufort was then confined to her chamber. Sir George, however, greeted him with heartfelt pleasure. —“ You are come, good brother, to witness my felicity. My Emma has this day presented me with a fine boy, and I am overjoyed to inform you, your sister is
uncommonly

uncommonly well for her situation.—Osmond ! my friend, what exquisite delight is that which a fond husband experiences on being blessed as a father. My Emma becomes, if possible, dearer to me than ever—such a nice boy too !—When shall I congratulate my friend on a similar occasion ?”

“ The period I believe, sir, is very remote, and the lot of man is so replete with disappointments, that his wishes are seldom gratified with permanent felicity. Heaven continue your’s uninterrupted and unclouded by the lightest shade of sorrow !”

The entrance of Mrs. Montgomery, dispelled the gloom that began to assail Osmond’s countenance, notwithstanding his unfeigned pleasure in the participation of domestic happiness.

“ Sir George,” said Mrs. Montgomery,
 “ Lady Beaufort has expected you an
 hour

hour since, and grows quite impatient at your delay.”—“ It was unavoidable, my dear madam; and while I afford my brother the pleasure of your company, I will go and exculpate myself.—Where is Jeffy ?”—“ With your lady,” replied Mrs. Montgomery.—During Sir George Beaufort’s transitory absence, she endeavoured to beguile the interval by a lively and spirited conversation, to which she was every way adequate.—Osmond listened with admiration.—Almost enamoured with the charming widow, he doubted much that the daughter could surpass the mother, even in personal attractions, which Mrs. Montgomery, though turned of forty, still possessed in a very eminent degree.

Having heard that Osmond had recently parted from Hamilton, Jeffy panted with impatience to converse with him. She invented a thousand innocent stratagems, which her mother premeditatedly
or

or by accident frustrated. The dinner hour she knew was approaching; though, comparatively speaking, the minutes lengthened into hours until her ardent wishes were gratified---“Confess, my dear Jessy,” said Lady Beaufort, as Mrs. Montgomery quitted the room, “your little heart bounds towards my brother—your kind mother almost provokingly anticipates my wishes to-day—beware, my dear, of your affections, for though he is my own brother, I dare assure you he is a dangerous creature.”—“Not till the name of Hamilton is obliterated from the tablets of my memory,” replied Jessy, her cheeks deeply tinged with scarlet. Her mother entering the room, prevented any further conversation on that topic, before the much-wished-for hour arrived; and Jessy, confused, overjoyed, and agitated, entered the drawing-room.—We have before mentioned the envy her incomparable beauty, her modest yet bewitching smiles, created at
the

the Honourable Mrs. Hustle's ball. We may then readily expect that Osmond, although tenderly attached to the no less beautiful Matilda, justly admired such transcendent loveliness. He soon perceived her expressive dark eyes sought an opportunity to make inquiries more interesting to her feelings than offered in the common subjects of discourse ; and, equally aware of her mother's aversion to a connection taking place with Hamilton, avoided mentioning his name. After tea Mrs. Montgomery repaired to the invalid's chamber for a short time : favourable as was this opportunity to Jeffy's wishes, her mother had scarce left the room ere her courage failed her, and she almost wished her returned. Her whole frame trembled ; her palpitating heart beat high. She longed, yet dreaded, to investigate the cause of Hamilton's silence, from whom she had received no intelligence since the unfortunate accident, but of which she was yet unapprized.—Osmond perceived

perceived her embarrassment ; he affected to be occupied, merely to give her time to recover her spirits, and turned from her to admire two beautiful drawings then lying on the table in an unfinished state. The one represented Minerva leading a young warrior to a temple, apparently at a considerable distance on a steep elevation, where Fame stood forming a wreath of laurels. Minerva's left-hand held Cupid's bow and arrow in the air, who, disarmed, stood mourning its loss at the young warrior's feet. The other drawing, its companion, represented an extensive encampment, Minerva, extended on the ground, lay asleep reclining her head on the trophies of war : by her side rested Hope, leaning upon a cannon, restoring the bow and arrow to Cupid, in exchange for his lighted torch ; while the perspective pourtrayed the same youth resting his arms at the altar of Hymen. Several little Cupids were judiciously dispersed in

in the fore-ground with lighted torches, as if in search of the bow and arrow; others were wreathed triumphantly pointing with marks of exultation to the sleeping goddesses of wisdom.—Osmond took the latter and deposited a letter to Jessy's direction on the figure of the young warrior, saying, "one of the beautiful drawings demanded her attention." As she approached, he hastened towards a glass chandelier on the chimney, as if to examine the other picture.—With undisguised pleasure, Jessy secreted the precious paper.

"These designs, I imagine," said Osmond, "are your own, madam."—"If they meet your approbation," replied Jessy, "I am happy to acknowledge them."—"It were impossible they should not, when it requires little discernment to recognize the personages are dear to ———and that with equal satisfaction I left one of the originals unchanged in health

health or sentiments since you were, madam, acquainted with both."—Jeffy bowed in answer, and felt her face glow so consciously with joy, that she now dreaded the appearance of her mother, lest she should discover the purport of their conference—scarcely had the thought taken birth, when the door opened for the very person in question.—Jeffy's apprehensions redoubled her emotions, and rendered them still more conspicuous. Osmond, however, well practised in every tender sensation of the heart, whether from love, hope, or fear, immediately arrested Mrs. Montgomery's attention, intimating in a low voice, "that she was venturesome to leave him alone with an object so truly interesting as her lovely daughter; at least, madam," continued Osmond, "while you are present the attention must ever remain divided."—The compliment had the desired effect: without noticing her daughter, she archly replied, "Sincerity in men, and flattery in women,

women, are two things, my dear sir, foreign to our expectation: the one we wish *in vain*, the other we *deem fictitious*!"

—Jessy meanwhile collected together her paints and brushes, while she recovered her usual serenity, and the remainder of the evening glided imperceptibly away to the mutual satisfaction of *all* parties.

During Osmond's residence in London, he briefly imparted to Sir George Beaufort, the occurrences which had taken place on the continent, with his own future intentions—"Would to heaven," cried Sir George, as they were conversing over the bottle, "that sweet girl above-stairs would get the better of a foolish partiality for a young British tar, and become your wife. Miss Evans excepted, she's the only woman I know in perfect unison of ideas with yourself. Between ourselves, her mother is rather a proud woman, and somewhat austere, which make me doubt that her daughter will
ever

ever obtain permission to marry Hamilton.—I am but slightly acquainted with the young man: still I am of opinion, his only fault is deficiency of wealth.”

“Justice,” replied Osmond, “demands impartiality; and impartiality will own him endowed with every attribute of worth.—Brothers in affliction, I would not for the universe, rob him of her heart, were Jessy even more desirable, more amiable, or a thousand times more lovely than she is.—No, Hamilton! the bandeau of love shall never blind the eyes of, or deaden the heart to faithful friendship: besides I have a wife in view, with whom is portioned out for me as much of happiness as destiny can give, while not possessed of Matilda.”—

Sir George pressed earnestly to know the name of this lady, which Osmond perseveringly refused to mention.

One night, Mrs. Montgomery, after
being

being highly pleased with young Evington's manners and conversation, and particularly noticing his trifling attentions to Jessy and herself, addressed her daughter with unusual seriousness: " My dear Jessy, I am going to divest myself of the authority of a mother, and to admonish you as a friend ; therefore listen to me attentively, and on deliberation give me your decisive answer. Ever since we unfortunately visited Yarmouth, now two years since, you have nourished a silly, and a romantic passion for Mr Hamilton. Fully do I perceive the influence, notwithstanding your silence, he still has upon your affection ; such an union would be highly disagreeable to me, and inimical to my every sentiment. You are equally destitute of fortune ; his pay being insufficient even to maintain himself, properly ; and my income too small to support you both. Shall I then countenance, my Jessy, the pride of my heart, the only pledge of her valiant father,

whose

whose family with my own, we may trace from *William the Conqueror*, becoming a victim to penury? Shall the child of Montgomery give her hand to the humble descendant of a low-born American? of an humdrum merchant, an alien, who for aught we know, sprung from some base emigrant to his country, or whose great-grand-father might be transported among the set of ruffians, by which America was first populated.—No! my love, let your dignity, your pride, supplant his memory in your breast; a nobler alliance awaits Montgomery's daughter."

Jeffy's sensibility, uncontaminated by vanity, shrunk from hearing her favourite friend disparaged on account of his genealogy. She shed the tributary tear, and replied, "Ask not of me impossibilities, dear madam, and I will comply to the extent of my power. While this union meets your disapprobation, I will not give my hand to Mr. Hamilton or to any person

other person living; and if it is not worth waiting for, while my affection continues unchanged, the person in my opinion is unworthy the gift."

"Nobly said, my dear Jeffy; with those ideas I still hope you will foresee your own and my interest too clearly not to acquiesce with my wishes to promote both. We are actually fortuneless, consequently we must bend to necessity, and not indulge inclination, which is very often at strange variance with propriety and interest. Had I followed the illusive charm of inclination, I should have married Sir Allen Knowles after your father's death; but what would have been the consequences? I should have invol'ed myself in the vortex of fashion and pleasure, with a gay young husband, whose slender income could ill supply our necessary expences, and most probably as our family augmented, we should have vainly deplored our embarrassed situation—yet it was with difficulty that I

commanded resolution sufficient to act contrary to the dictates of my heart, which acknowledged him too amiable for its tranquillity ; but *prudence* pointed to me the glaring impropriety of such a match, and I discarded him for ever ! Since which, you know, he is so deeply involved in debt, that I have hourly cause to bless my fortunate escape.—My Jessy is nearly in the same predicament, unbalanced even by fortune or title.—My child be advised, relinquish every predilection in favour of another, and form a meritorious connection, which will secure your lasting happiness.—I understand Miss Evans has declined Mr. Osmond Evington's proposals : he is nevertheless determined to marry.—Can you, Jessy, resist the solicitation of an affectionate mother, who implores you to accept Mr. Evington's attentions with distinguished approbation ? With such an husband, what felicity awaits you !—good, virtuous, and experienced ; fortune is his least endowment.

dowment.—Ah, my Jeffy ! my child ! be not blinded : recollect the advantages, blended with such an alliance, and provoke me not to suppose my child is a stranger to her duty.”

Jeffy trembled, yet collected firmness to reply :—“ Exclusive, my dear madam, of the benefits which might be derived by a connection with this gentleman, his family and personal attractions offer powerful inducements in his favour. Mr. Osmond deservedly possesses my highest veneration ; but my soul recoils at the idea of imposing on myself a task, so repugnant to my feelings, as counterfeiting a passion I cannot command : indeed I could not, even at the greatest of all risks, that of your highest displeasure.”

Mrs. Montgomery seldom pleaded to her daughter on any point ; a look, a word usually sufficed to enjoin, or to disapprove. In other respects, always a fond and affectionate mother, but some-

what overruled by an inordinate share of pride, she imagined that whatever she advanced or judged adviseable, was not only of superior consideration, but demanded implicit obedience. Her daughter's impressivè refusal surprised and aggravated her.—She concluded it arose from her own condescension in supplicating, where she ought to have commanded.

“ Miss Montgomery,” replied the mistaken mother, “ you once knew the duty a *parent* requires from her child: I am sorry to perceive it is forgotten; and that misplaced indulgence, by intreating where I should have exacted, has made you disregard my authority.—Very well, madam! I shall doubtless acquaint your uncle with this perverseness, and see if he will listen to your romantic nonsense. You will either convince me before to-morrow night of a change in your sentiments, or your uncle is apprised immediately of this transaction.”—Casting a severe look

look upon her daughter, she repaired to her own chamber, to meditate what methods were most adviseable towards eradicating Hamilton from Jessy's faithful memory.—While, penetrated with grief, her daughter relieved her full heart over the contents of Hamilton's last fond and expressive epistle: every line, replete with tenderness, strengthened her resolution, and augmented her affection. She perused and re perused it, ejaculating, in tears, “shall duty give my hand to another, while the purest love has affianced my heart to Hamilton? True he is not rich, he is not of illustrious birth; yet may he not rise in his profession?—Alas! were his birth equally elevated with his mind, Jessy would have no means of distinguishing her disinterestedness, and no proof that the one uninfluenced the other. He is contented to wait for promotion, before he claims my hand, and I too, till that period, to give it—satisfied of his integrity, convinced of his affection, and confid-

ing in his honour, the whole tenor of my life is dedicated to deserve them.—Doubtless my uncle claims my gratitude for his kind assistances in respect to my education, and I sincerely wish to avoid offending him.—Yet to sacrifice my fidelity, my honour, and my happiness, cannot be the return which virtue herself would require.—What conduct shall I pursue?—She questioned herself by ruminating first on one expedient, then on another.—“ Osmond is of a generous disposition : to him will I make known my distress ; besides his avowed friendship for Hamilton, may, in some measure, induce him to extricate us all from this dilemma.”—In such reflections she passed the beginning of the night, and rose to put them to the test the next morning.

“ You are surprised,” said Miss Montgomery to Osmond, “ that we meet thus unusually early ; you will be infinitely more so, when I tell you it was intentionally
on

on my part, and, to encrease both, it is to confess that my mother is particularly anxious for my rendering myself exceedingly agreeable, extremely amiable, and all that, to one pre-eminently esteemed by me, but"—

" Mrs. Montgomery need not have desired you to make yourself that which you cannot help being at all times."

" You are, I know, very gallant ; but it is neither in my power or inclination to be as agreeable to you as my mother wishes ; for I candidly acknowledge that there is a somebody in the world I am more anxious to please than yourself : now that somebody is very obnoxious to her,—she threatens to write to my old uncle Hainault, if I do not transfer my preference to a certain gentleman, infinitely amiable, and deservedly high in her good graces : yet I am of that stubborn nature that I find the task impossible. —Now, Mr. Evington, what is to be done ? My uncle, old and irascible, will

never forgive his head-strong niece, nor my mother her undutiful daughter.”

Osmond paused, and after reflecting a few moments, taking her hand, replied, “Lovely, ingenuous beauty, dispel your apprehensions: the person your mother undeservedly honours with her approbation, will undertake to disentangle her amiable daughter from the present difficulty, if she will condescend to abide by the advice of one who esteems as much as he admires her, and will not abuse her confidence.—Pretend to comply with Mrs. Montgomery’s command.—I will rather affect to countenance the supposition, which will be an agreeable task on my part; carefully, however, shunning every opportunity propitious to a declaration; and as my stay here will necessarily be very short, the affair must inevitably go off, by my leaving you in a *certain uncertainty*.—This innocent stratagem can hurt no one, and may effect much good, by restoring you to Mrs. Montgomery’s favour,

your, who will, with apparent reason, impute to me all the blame."

Jeffy was reluctant ; but Osmond assured her there could be no impropriety in this little deception. She no longer resisted the temptation, and the plan was put into practice the same day. Mrs. Montgomery appeared delighted with her daughter, whom she imagined had returned to her wonted submission, and attributed her ready compliance, not so much to the fear of incensing her uncle, as to the peremptory manner in which she had enforced her commands.

For a short time this deception went on much to the satisfaction of all parties, save that of Jeffy, who felt some repugnance to acting the double part. Mrs. Montgomery sometimes anticipated that the succeeding hour would witness the declaration she so much wished ; which anticipations were invariably destroyed by some pointed and sudden transition of indifference.

indifference and neglect, diametrically opposite to those previous attentions which she conceived to be indubitable testimonies of *love*.—Yet these subtleties by no means altered her opinion—she knew that so many young men of fashion accustom themselves to these airs, and were frequently more inconsistent than the weather-cock is changeable, though innately the heart is often excellent. Indulging in this idea, she already planned the most elegant dresses for the wedding. Osmond being permitted to converse unmolested with the fair Jessy, his conversations turned indeed on love, but it was the love of his friend; and Hamilton was thus addressing his ardent vows by proxy; while Jessy in return listened with attention to Osmond's complaints of the insensible Matilda.

A summons from Osmond's Colonel now demanded his immediate attendance at his regiment: he obeyed with pleasure,
and

and taking a tender farewell of his sister and his little nephew, who bore his christian name, and slightly bidding Mrs. and Miss Montgomery adieu, left London with all possible dispatch—much to Mrs. Montgomery's surprise and disappointment.—Osmond indeed had quitted London sooner than was absolutely requisite, to enjoy the pleasing satisfaction of remaining a short time near his father's grounds, and indulging in solitude the sweet reflections they would naturally inspire.

CHAPTER XII.

" Come, ever welcome, and thy succour lend,
 Oh ! every sacred name in one !—my Friend !
 Whate'er through life's whole series I have done,

.
 Or good or grateful, now to mind recal ;
 And aiding this one hour repay it all."

The Odyssey.—POPE.

ARRIVED at Ivy Bridge, he repaired to the honest Ashwood's farm.—" My dear and beloved young master, as I live !" cried the venerable grey-headed man.—" What an unhopèd for joy ! how often—nay, this very day I said, I fear I shall follow my wife without once again blessing my dear young Mr. Osmond—old as I am, sir, I would have hobbled thirty miles to have that satisfaction. Bless you, bless you, an hundred times—and how is all your good family ? and the sweet Miss Evans' ?—all well ?—Honour me

me, pray fir, by partaking of our humble meal, that I may fee you, talk with you, and hear you.—Lord ! how good art thou to indulge us thus in all our wifhes : how grateful ought we to be for thy bounties !—Great God, thy lowly fervant is moft heartily thankful for this interview !” —The old man then raifed his trembling hands, while he pronounced, with fervency, and religious zeal, his humble prayers to the Almighty.

Osmond accepted their hofpitality, on the affurance that Eglantine fhould not prepare any thing more than ufually decked the table, which now confifted of a cold round of beef, bread, cheefe, clouted cream, radifhes, and fresh butter.—Eglantine folicted the honour of dreffing him fomewhat hot, and very unwillingly fubmitted to his pofitive refufal.—All feated round the table, after having offered a fhort prayer of thanksgiving for what lay before them. The old man produced
a bottle

a bottle of his best port-wine :—" Come, my noble young master," said Ashwood, " we farmers seldom indulge ourselves with wine, but on very extraordinary occasions, when we love to produce the best of its sort ; and I'll venture to affirm, that although we cannot afford to give it often, when we do, it is with an hearty welcome. Henry, my boy, go tap that cask of ale, which our dear excellent master gave us for preserving thy life : we will drink from it, to Sir George Beaufort, to his lady, and their little new-born babe : God grant him as great a blessing to his parents as mine has been to me !"

" I suppose," cried Eglantine, " you have met Lady Stanhope Murdoc on your road.—Is it not a pity, sir, now she's become so grand a lady, she don't relieve her poor mother, Mrs. Armintor, who, I believe, has very little to support her ?"

Henry

Henry returned here with a frothy can of ale, and presented it to Osmond, who having drank, and passed the given toast, enquired whether Mrs. Armintor still discountenanced her daughter.

“ Bless me !” said Eglantine, “ why, fir, Miss Patty never asked her mother any thing about the matter. I know it made the old lady very miserable. She does nothing but weep, even to this day ; it is said for certain that Sir Stanhope never would have married her, had she not declared she would sue him in a public court if he did not, for a false promise of marriage, which the old gentleman did not like. I am told he said to his own valet, ‘ I’ll e’en marry that giddy girl : she has seen nothing of the world, I can make her do just what I please, and when I am sick she will do to keep me company,’ — Did not the valet tell us so, Henry ?”

“ Aye, and more too,” replied Henry :

“ ‘ I shall

“ ‘I shall take good care,’ says the baronet, ‘from the beginning to hold the reins, not forgetting a tight curb at all times; and as she shall only see what company I chuse, I will keep a good guard they don’t corrupt her; for,’ says he, ‘that’s the duce and all in London: a man can’t go out and amuse himself, but some fly fellow meanwhile comes to amuse his wife; fills her head with a pack of London airs, whims, and caprices, and the devil knows what.—Egad,’ said the old baronet, ‘I ought to know pretty well the trade; for though no man excelled more than myself, and still mean to do, with other men’s *wives*, I have no inclination mine should learn lessons from their husbands or any body but myself.’ ”

“ Would you believe it possible,” said Eglantine, with astonishment, “ that any gentleman could say so much ? ”

“ All men, Eglantine, are not what they seem : ” replied Osmond, “ our sex, indeed, is little to be trusted, for too often

we

we think it no harm to offer to others what we should highly resent if proffered to ourselves, and those we love. It is regarded as neither more nor less than common gallantry.—Thus do many men, from this misjudging motive, pretend to love half a dozen young women at a time, without even giving a thought on matrimony; and the more wretched they make their too-credulous victims, the greater is their insidious triumph.—I spare not my own sex, you see, neither do I consider myself as exempt from follies, though I confess I wish to obviate those which, in my opinion, are criminal, such as wantonly destroying a fellow-creature's peace of mind."

" Lord! Lord!" exclaimed Henry, how glad I am my sister Teeny was not born a fine lady! because I am sure I'd as soon kill a man for using her ill, as look at him, that's what I would.—Do you know, sir, that Sir Stanhope and I had nearly come to a downright *pitch battle*,
because

because he would not leave her alone; and I am sure if any fine gentleman, possessed of his weight in gold, was to meddle with my wife, damme I should be ready to eat 'em up; but pray, Mr. Osmond, ar'n't these gay Londoners afraid to leave their wives alone? Poor things, I dare say they're to be pitied sure enough!"

"You are not to imagine, Henry, every man of fashion to be another Sir Stanhope, who wishes to estrange our wives from their families—no, no, let us hope the age not so depraved, my good fellow—nor that we are all of that jealous nature to suspect our wives require a continual guard over their actions. The worst husbands are the most jealous, and the most irascible are those whose early connexions have been with disreputable and bad characters, to whose light ideas, loose principles, and immoral conduct, they are accustomed; and judging from them that all women are, in some measure,
of

of the like principles, they imagine they cannot exact too rigid scrupulousness in their wives' behaviour. These men we doubtless wish to avoid, and pitiable are those who fall into their snares!—I have heard it said, that a reformed rake makes a good husband; exceptions are always allowable, but I believe it to be a very mistaken idea, and could adduce such incontestable proofs to the contrary, that no woman of sense and virtue would adopt the opinion."

"You are right—right," said old Ashwood, nodding his grey locks with a cunning conscientious smile, "and let us drink my old favourite toast May the single be married, and the married happy! and may the old rake be united to the artful coquette!"

Osmond finished another bottle with his honest tenants, and took leave about eleven, carrying with him their blessings, mingled

mingled with the soft effusions of their gratitude.

The description these people had given of Madame de Souci and her daughter, added to that already given by Sir George Beaufort, made Osmond look with impatience for the morrow, when he was to deliver to the younger lady a letter from Emma. Their sorrows (of which he was partly acquainted) served as a magnet to his own—labouring under the keenest of all maladies, he felt deeply concerned for others in affliction. Young de Souci had joined the Emigrant Corps, under the Prince of Condé; they were consequently more in want of consolation than ever. About noon he walked towards the cottage, and meeting with Eglantine they entered into conversation:—"Are you acquainted, sir, with Madame de Souci's story?"—"Very partially; for my brother tells me they refrain from entering into any particulars of their situation with him or
my

my sister.”—“ So my lady used to say, when she was here, but from Lisette yesterday escaped some things concerning them ; however she charged me not even to let Lady Beaufort know it, for her mistress would never forgive her.”—“ You may rely, Eglantine, on my secrecy ; do, my good girl, indulge me.”

Eglantine thought she could not decently refuse her young master :—“ Convinced, sir,” she cried, “ you are a man of honour, and I owe you so much that it were impossible for me to decline your request—First, Lisette assured me that de Souci is not their real name ; I think she said it is—dear, bless me, I fear I have already forgot the other name, but I know it was something about a *Bell*.”

“ Surely it was not Belville ?”

“ Yes, yes, sir, that’s the very name, I am confident ;—Belville, yes—Belville.”

“ Then Eglantine you may rejoice ; this discovery will restore happiness to their oppressed bosoms, for I now fully
compre-

comprehend the cause of their misfortunes. Propitious day! — come, little maid, come with me that you may partake of the smiles of renovating joy, since you have partook of the tears of despondency.”

Eglantine amazed, and scarcely believing what she heard, with difficulty kept pace with Osmond, who, eager to impart his glad tidings, now hurried along by large strides, meditating in what manner most delicate to break the discovery without abruptness, and entirely forgetting he had a companion. Eglantine sometimes ran a few yards, then rested to regain respiration, but vainly strove to keep up with her swift pedestrian.

At length Osmond, wishing to learn whether Lifette had mentioned any thing about de Courcy's being guillotined, turned to ask the question, when he perceived the little black-eyed maid at a considerable distance behind him. Till now he was not aware of the rapid progress he had

had made, and felt really hurt that his impetuosity had hurried him beyond the precincts of that civility he deemed every person's due, and more especially so to the gentle, the mild, and the grateful little Eglantine; his consciousness of this neglect carried with it its own reproof: Osmond turned back and soon rejoined her—"Indeed, Eglantine," said he, "I acknowledge myself guilty of great rudeness, though unintentionally, I assure you; rest yourself, my good girl, you are out of breath—I really am sorry,"—"And for what, sir? you rude? no, that I'm sure you never were—as for leaving me, I know it is my duty to walk behind you, and it was a great condescension in you to walk with me."—"Charming girl! your merit elevates your birth, and renders you my superior, who ought to have known better; but an over-charged mind, with an aching heart, Eglantine, often render us deficient in the punctilios of society—every sphere of life demands politeness

liteness from one to another, and the higher class ought to give the example."

" You, sir," replied Eglantine, " are always considerate to every class of people. I wish other gentlemen about here would be of your opinion, and then they would not take pleasure to splash us all over when they pass; and then, if we complain, sir, they say we ought to be proud to be even thus regarded by them: for my part, I am so proud that I neither like to look upon nor be stared at by any of them, and my brother tells me (continued Eglantine colouring) that its quite the fashion in London to shove a lady that's nicely dressed into the gutter—to splash her all over, laugh in her face, jostle her against the wall, if she happens not to have a footman behind her!—Surely, sir, gentlemen in London are very rude, if what he says is true."

" It is but too true," rejoined Osmond; " in the streets of London it is very often the case, though disgraceful to our sex,
who

who arrogate to themselves the privilege of shielding your's from insult. However, do not suppose, Eglantine, that any real gentleman would debase himself by such unhandsome behaviour; for what is barely excusable in the hair-brained stripling, becomes wanton insolence, and would be unpardonable in a young man of sense and education."

They were now arrived at the "*Fugitive Cot*," so called since Madame de Souci's abode there. Eglantine entered, and, with surprize, beheld the kitchen in confusion;—the chairs put together, the saucepans, &c. &c. upon the table and floor, with every appearance of a removal. "What can these preparations portend?" exclaimed Osmond, equally astonished.—Before Eglantine could ask any questions, little Edward came in; his eyes were red, and the child looked offended: on seeing Osmond he would have retired, but Eglantine approached

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him, taking his hand, "Where is your mama, Edward?" — "Very unhappy up stairs," replied the little boy, who now spoke English with tolerable facility; "I wish I was bigger—I like the English women, but not Englishmen,—that I don't."

"And why, my love?" returned Eglantine.

"Because they speak so cross to my poor mama, and make her cry."

"Who, then, is with your mama?"

"A great, tall, black, ugly-looking man, who is going to take all the things in the house from us, and grand-mama won't have a bed to lie upon!" said Edward, bursting into tears. A rough, commanding voice at the same instant assailed their attention, exclaiming,—
"Promises, ladies, are bad payments; the laws of my country are not like your own, thank God! come, produce the rest of the goods."

"But,

“ But, fir, my time is not expired until the end of next month, when you shall be either paid or take the goods ; I shall certainly keep them till then ;” replied a soft and supplicating voice, in tremulous accents.

“ Oh ! you will, will you ? and I suppose you’ll pay Mr. Turner’s executors, or they’ll shew you what *they will do*,” replied the man, in a tone at once abusive and satyrical.

Eglantine aghast, knew not whither to turn---to go up stairs, or to seek the maid-servant. Osmond, equally confuted, listened---doubtful whether to investigate the meaning of this business, or retire and wait a more suitable opportunity to reveal his secret. Yet, the possibility of his being useful occurred, and determined him to send Eglantine to Madame de Souci with his name ; the suggestion was no sooner made than executed. Little Edward would abso-

lutely accompany Eglantine, though he appeared much afraid of the man up stairs, saying as he went, " Indeed, sir, I must go—mama is crying, and she wants me."

Eglantine found Madame de Souci and her daughter mournfully occupied, displaying their little furniture to a tall man, whose prominent brow, harsh features, and twisted mouth, inspired terror. " Ah, my good child!" said the old lady, " I find in all countries there is good and bad persons. So many cruelties," continued she in broken English, " there are lately done in my own unfortunate land, that I did begin to suppose it particularly given to cruelty—alas! I find even your own generous and happy kingdom then, can throw off themselves all feeling in the day of prosperity!—Ah! mon Dieu! I am very miserable: your very good father, I understand, without my knowing it, will let me have this
house

house as long as I will; he is indeed very kind, but this person says to me the man I have the furniture of has died, and left many debts, so he must have these few things to-morrow—ah! mon Dieu!”

“ That he shall not,” said Eglantine; “ for I’ll go, tell my father, and see what’s to be done: but, madam (turning to the younger lady), here is a letter for you, and Mr. Osmond Evington wishes to see you.”

“ Who is the bearer?”

“ I am ill prepared,” rejoined the pale and agitated mother, as she held her little boy’s hand, “ to receive a stranger.”

“ Oh! mama, you must not be afraid; he is not at all like that ugly black man, but looks quite as good as my uncle.”

A few steps introduced Madame de Souci to Osmond—still trembling beneath her distress, she addressed him in French. Her shining cheeks bore evident testimony of the numberless tears which had

bedewed them—"An unforeseen misfortune," she said, "had disordered her spirits, and she begged to apologize for keeping him waiting in a room so unfit for his reception." After the first enquiries were made respecting the health of Lady Beaufort and Sir George, Osmond requested, if it were not impertinent, to learn the explanation of the man's words, which he had overheard.—"I understand very little English, sir," she continued in French, "and speak still less; however, I hear from my mother that this man is an appraiser, and empowered by the creditors of Mr. Turner, who is deceased, to take all our household furniture and table linen from us, notwithstanding that we hold them in virtue of a lease signed by Mr. Turner, which the good old Mr. Ashwood insisted on having drawn up to prevent misunderstandings betwixt us and Mr. Turner, whom he said was not to be trusted. My mother thinks the lease must be valid until the expiration of

of

of the time stated therein, and is much averse to relinquish her claim:—yet, unprotected and strangers as we are, how can she maintain it?”

Osmond rose, and begged permission to be conducted to the person in question: scarcely waiting for her consent, he flew up stairs, turning to where the voice came from. The old lady started—Osmond’s looks demonstrated anger; he courteously bowed to Madame de Souci, then addressed the appraiser, who instantly assumed another tone of voice, and bowed submissively:—“ Mr. Scruple,” said Osmond, “ I overheard your gross behaviour with indignation—often have I heard your character mentioned, and am now convinced of its brutality;—please to leave this house, sir, and these goods—they are mine—come upon me for their value when you please. On recollection, Mr. Scruple, as you are so well acquainted with the laws of our

N 4

country,

country, to them I refer you for payment, if desired before the termination of the lease these ladies hold. Now, on your peril, touch an article in this house; forgive me, ladies, but this man's conduct has so incensed me, that I cannot command my temper."

"How I do wish I was as big as this gentleman, mama, to scold that ugly man just as he has done!" exclaimed Edward, looking disdainfully on the appraiser, who attempted to palliate his rudeness, by the necessity he was under of performing his duty. The furniture being already valued, Mr. Scruple made the best of his way out of the house, telling Osmond, '*he* should certainly see who the laws would guarantee.'

"Ah! noble, generous Englishman!" said the old lady; "well may they say, a good tree never produces bad fruit;—my obligations to you are eternal!"—Here gratitude became too abundant to be expressed in broken English, Madame de Souci

Souci therefore continued in French—
 “ Allow me now, my good young friend, to suggest a mode of repaying you this loan: you must indeed suffer me to be your debtor for a short time; as I can only reimburse the whole by small instalments. Nay, then, I cannot accept your kindness. Think me not proud, I am but just—but even from your sister, who possesses my highest esteem, I never could receive a pecuniary obligation.”

“ Well, madam, we will settle that business another time.”

“ No, no, my young friend, I must refuse your goodness if you reject my offer—sixty pounds is rather more than I can command at present, but in three payments I shall consider myself happy to discharge it, for the sum would not be of magnitude. Misfortunes, sir, may oppress us; where they are unavoidable we must submit, but they cannot abject the soul.”

“ Certainly not, madam; but to the great mind misfortunes are of essential benefit, inasmuch as they elevate the soul, they expand the ideas and force them into action;—however, please yourself,” replied Osmond, “ I am satisfied; and be assured that sooner or later the rays of virtue will disperse the clouds of adversity—even now I am confident the Fates are preparing you a grateful surprize !”

The young mother kissed her smiling boy, and sighed deeply, as if to intimate that in him lay all her hopes of happiness: “ Alas ! Mr. Evington, our prospects are so intercepted by impenetrable darkness, the clouds gather so quick one upon another, that if a celestial ray of fortune appears to cheer our dispirited souls, it is so transient, that it only awakens the memory to a keener sense of departed happiness.”

“ The

“ The heaviest clouds,” replied Osmond, “ in time will disperse, madam; I doubt not your prospects are brightening—there appears a gleam of light darting from an eastern point, that will, I am of opinion, diffuse joy in all your bosoms, particularly—no, I’ll not anticipate *too* much,” said Osmond, observing Madame de Souci change colour, on the mere supposition of again seeing him her heart incessantly mourned, and who of course became the first and only object in her imagination. “ And what would you say, my charming little boy, if I should see your dear mama happy?”

“ You can’t bring papa to her, for he is *dead*, sir—killed in the battles;—and mama says she will never be happy till she meets him.”

“ Suppose I were to bring your papa?”

The boy looked at him steadfastly in silence, as if considering what he should give him for so doing.

“ Why then I would kiss you before I did papa, and give you my hand English fashion.”

“ Give it me now, and remember your promise.”---Edward rather mistrustfully complied, as Osmond took leave, calling out:---“ I sha’n’t forget, sir---I sha’n’t forget.”

Eglantine meantime had been to her father, and, with the venerable old man, was returning to the cottage, when Osmond informed them that the business was concluded---“ I have not, however, apprized Madame de Souci of the pleasantest part of my visit, because they were both so much flurried, I feared two surprizes, diametrically opposite, might be productive of bad consequences; meanwhile, I have slightly prepared the way, and shall write to-night to Count de Belville, in London, a letter, which will bring him here, and then personally impart

impart the motives that induced me to send to him."

Old Ashwood wiped away the rejoicing tear, while Eglantine fell on her knees and kissed his hands. Osmond dispatched a messenger from the farm to Portland-place, with a note requiring Count de Belville's attendance at Ivy-bridge without delay.

On young Evington's return home, the unexpected appearance of his valuable friend and tutor (the Reverend Doctor Orton) was the first grateful recompence he experienced, as if to repay his kindness.---"From your brother, Sir George Beaufort, I heard that my young friend stood in need of consolation, and I hasten to offer my assistance, if not my advice."---Doctor Orton felt deeply concerned to observe his beloved pupil so much altered; his looks were harassed, his eyes heavy, his person visibly shrunk, and
alto-

altogether a shade of the noble, the handsome Osmond Evington!--"Your silence concerning the position of your mind and heart, gave me to hope neither burthened by an unpleasant thought---though I ought to have been aware that real grief is frequently deadly silent, even to a friend."

"Alas, sir! of what avail is it to call in a physician when the malady baffles all cure? I---am my own doctor, and prepare my own medicines, as you are doubtless informed---kill or cure is my doctrine, and the drugs are of the most potent kind."

"Still impetuous!--still rash!--I find you still the same, my young friend!--Patience, patience, perhaps we may yet adjust matters; let us consult together often in the day of trouble--in the hour of disappointment we are apt to decide according to the complexion of our minds, and from its dismal cast, we suggest remedies opposite to our own interest, against
our

our happiness, and destructive to our peace of mind. Consider, Osmond, the grief you would occasion your best of parents should any misfortune befall their only son!---consider the new scene of life you are entering; so pregnant with dangers, fatigues, tumult and riot, not to mention its invitations to gaieties and libertinisms."

"The deed is done, my dear sir, and if I have not the resolution to shun vice—surely I am negatively virtuous. He who is a stranger to temptation is an alien to his own passions; nor can he who never loved, know the lover's pang!"

"Virtuous affections make usually deep impressions, nevertheless by good sense and reason, in a mind like your's, even they may be subdued."

"Never, never, sir; it is rooted here (striking his breast), and here it will remain, until the happy period when we mingle with the dust and cease to think of earthly beings."

"You

“ You were not given, my dear friend, to argue thus despondingly; a noble spirit will never yield to desperation --courage, Osmond---recollect that first of all lessons given us by our heavenly father, ‘ *The Lord trieth the righteous, but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.*’—The righteous man, who placeth his trust in him shall be recompensed by eternal glory; but those who have no confidence in the Deity shall feel in their bosoms the turbulence of despair.”

Osmond seemed absorbed in reflection; his eyes were fixed on the ground, his arms folded—“ Ah! my young friend,” continued the excellent preceptor, gazing on him, with concern, “ you disregard my councils--you are voluntarily deaf to the voice of moral philosophy, and you give unlimited sway to an uncontrouled passion.”

“ Uncontrouled! said you, Mr. Orton? alas! my kind friend, were you acquainted with half the struggles this agitated
bosom

bosom has overcome, you would retract your words."

"And have you," enquired Doctor Orton, "have you compared your misfortunes, as you call them, with those of others?"

"Alas! yes, fir---and have, comparatively speaking, found none to equal my own."

"You have---and you really think none equal?—then hear this tale of unparalleled woe, which, if you can give attention, I will venture to affirm is far greater than any my young friend has ever experienced."

"Is it the loss of friends?—Is it the want of money?—Is it ingratitude?—All these, methinks, I could endure with resignation."

"Ah! Osmond, you know not what these losses are, or you would not think so—but I will cease to obtrude—I have done."

"No,

"No, fir, I conjure you, indulge me by the recital : attention waits your words."

"Then turn your thoughts on that illustrious family ; think on the King of France, LOUIS SEIZE !—what are your sufferings compared to his?—Sinking under a whole mistaken nation's wrath—a nation which he so loved and governed with the reins of affection !—Unhappy sovereign ! what a fate was thine, and thy truly lovely family !—who shall dare to compare his miseries with thine, great monarch ?—thy calamities as far exceeding their's as the great King of kings' sovereignty exceeded thine !—Look into our own history, not a page scarce opens to our view which is not descriptive of incidents outrageously grievous. Remember the hapless Edwy--recal to mind his heart-rending pangs—paint to your imagination the beautiful face of his wife Elfrida---the fairest, the loveliest, and the most perfect form of woman !---Then behold her, as his adored wife, torn from
him

him with savage violence to be mutilated with red-hot irons, and left to linger, yet to survive this barbarism!—See her again all purity, all affection, which no human power could estrange, but vested in her recovery with brighter loveliness, once more blessed in the arms of her fond husband---there, forgetful of every injury she had unmeritingly received, she considered herself happy:—and then recollect, after all, that her beautiful head was severed from her no less beautiful body! What are your distresses, Osmond, compared to Edwy's?—Speak candidly, were Matilda Evans your wife—judge if——”

“ Hold, hold, for God's sake, sir; or my chilled blood will cease to flow!—Gracious God! how ungrateful is thy servant!—no truly, Mr. Orton, mine is the mere wound of a thorn, which festers and becomes troublesome from my own impatient spirit, while their's are mortal wounds indeed—past recovery!”

Doctor

Doctor Orton perceived his pupil began to credit that there were heavier evils than his own; and, therefore, with nicety changed the subject, previous to their separating for the night.

CHAPTER XIII.

“What strange events can strike with more surprise,
Than those which lately struck thy wond’ring eyes;
Yet taught by these, confess the Almighty just,
And where you can’t unriddle, learn to trust.”

PARNEL.

OSMOND most highly esteemed his tutor. Unreservedly he confided to him every thought of his heart, and found considerable relief from his wise counsels. —On the second day a letter arrived from the officer of whom Osmond had purchased his commission, which seriously distressed him : Dr. Orton being present, he requested to learn its purport, since it appeared to embarrass him—“And not without reason, sir, as you shall hear :”—Osmond read as follows :

“Sir,

“ Sir,

“ The unfortunate are seldom heard ; nevertheless, as I am the father of a large family, and have a dear wife now confined to her bed, paternal feelings adduce such powerful reasons to entertain hope, that I am compelled to lay my situation before you, satisfied it will sufficiently claim your pity, and perhaps your assistance.— It is many years since I married a young lady, my present wife, against the consent of her guardians, who unhappily, unknown to us, had it in their power to deprive her of a large fortune. I had only the scanty pay of a subaltern officer to maintain her, who was brought up in every delicacy of mind and body : however, as we were mutually deceived by the guardians, it in no way diminished our affection : we lived frugally, and were happy, under the certainty my wife’s fortune would be equally divided hereafter among our children ; our family increased

so rapidly that we applied again to her guardian for their maintenance, but were again peremptorily refused. This amiable woman resigned every worldly pleasure to share the fatigues and cares of her family, consisting of eight little ones, and the expectation of another.—To support this family I was induced to sell my commission, which you, sir, generously purchased at my own price. My intention was to seek a more lucrative employment—you wished two months' credit, which I could not refuse. But what will you say, when I implore your goodness for immediate payment? The person of whom I bought a share in a mercantile house has failed, and arrested me for the debt, notwithstanding he had my note, at two months' date, which he destroyed in my presence, and insists now on ready-money.—Every hour is misery, while I am confined in this horrid place: for Heaven sake, sir, compassionate our distress!—My poor wife in bed, my children
in

in want of food, and no one to pacify their cries, but him who is torn from them and who anxiously requests the favour of an early answer ;

“ Which will greatly oblige,

“ your distracted humble servant,

“ JAMES GROVENOR.”

“ Well !” cried Doctor Orton, “ there is no difficulty in answering this letter : I am sure you may draw on your father for the sum.”

Osmond shook his head, and sat musing some time ; then exclaimed, in a disconsolate voice, “ It is already done ; I have, sir, drawn upon him.”—“ Then why so melancholy ? the money is ready.”—“ No, sir—the money—is—is already spent.”

Doctor Orton seemed much surprised, and spoke not : he sighed, suspecting that Osmond had gamed it away.—“ Tell me—tell me, the worst—how is it gone, Osmond ? and how much ?”

“ Fifteen

"Fifteen hundred pounds, sir!—and I cannot command *two*!"

Doctor Orton was a man of strict principles, and peculiarly averse to that destructive vice of all vices—gaming: he consequently felt acutely hurt, that his pupil, whose many shining attributes graced his tutorship, and rendered him universally beloved in society, should be tarnished by the most detested quality, and, in his opinion, the most unpardonable of crimes.

"And has my son, my pupil, my esteemed young friend, condescended to debase himself and me, by participating and forming one among those many unhappy men who ruin themselves, their companions, their friends and their families!—and do I live to know it?—I must be deceived—age, indeed, impairs the intellects—has it my understanding? would to God! I may be mistaken!"—said the
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reverend tutor, trembling lest his suspicions should be confirmed.—Osmond, lost in thought, and scanning over the petitioner's letter, which distressed him beyond idea, gave no answer.—The good man, attributing his silence to an affirmative, continued, "Then farewell, virtue, honour, and hope !—Since my best, my paragon of goodness has defiled them all, by the voluntary loss of fifteen hundred pounds ! where shall we seek for the virtuous ? where shall the unfortunate, the poor, the orphan, the widow, seek relief ? when the most promising heart, a soul noble and generous, squanders away their staff of hope, at the devil's own tables, in the devil's own drawing-room, that vortex of dissipation, that sink of vice—that London !—Fifteen hundred pounds !—and all at once !—where did you lose it ?—and with whom ?—Oh, my deluded son !"

Osmond, awakened from his reverie, listened

promised loan, and fully purposed to amply reward this unexpected goodness. His tutor was not rich, although his purses were always open to the calls of necessity ; and from his great and generous example, most probably we see Osmond the man he is.—Doctor Orton, after supper, informed his pupil that he was constrained to leave him the next morning—an appraisal that grieved Osmond, and the more from its suddenness. Doctor Orton pleaded the calls of business, but promised to return, and bade him an affectionate adieu.

The late conversations this worthy man had with Osmond, wholly occasioned this departure, which arose from no other motive than to procure his beloved pupil the promised money, nearly amounting to as much as he possessed in the world ; being the younger son of a large family, and better known by his literary merits and superior talents, than by fortune,—
which

which was then in the three per cent stocks, and not above four thousand pounds.

He now intended selling out fifteen hundred, though at a great disadvantage, from the fall of the stocks.—This detriment was however disregarded, for he would have parted with all his property on such an occasion. It was to extricate a distressed family, and to oblige Osmond, the chosen of his heart. He therefore hesitated not a moment, but hastened to London, fulfilled his intention, and sent the money by the return of the post.

The Count de Belville arrived the preceding day towards sun-set.—Osmond received him with every testimony of friendship, yet withheld gratifying any part of his curiosity until after dinner; well aware that his emotions on being informed of the purport of his journey, would prevent him taking any refreshment.—Osmond then demanded, “Have

you courage to bear an information that will greatly surprise and affect you."

"Undoubtedly, I *have*: speak, sir, I am prepared—Is my brother dead? alas! he has long been so to me—not knowing where he has secluded himself."

"Your brother is well: but other joys await you."---De Belville flushed and turned pale—trembling and hoping, yet not daring to credit his hopes; he articulated, "Speak, Mr. Evington; speak, or I sink beneath the expectation!"

"Your mother—your child, live!"

"Live!—my mother---my child---live! - they live!--but my Julianne, my wife, my angel, then, is no more!"

Deep sighs in rapid succession demonstrated the agony of pleasure and pain he suffered, as he hung his head on his folded arms on the table: "My child!—my mother!--oh! God!"

"Summon your fortitude, my friend: you ought to rejoice—your wife is—"

"My

" My wife—is what ?—I do rejoice—I do—my wife ! you will then not tell me ?—oh ! my Juliette !—torture me no longer, for Heaven's sake !—she is dead ?"

" She is living----but your impatience gives me no time to speak."---

" She lives!--my Juliette lives !" cried Belville, starting from his seat and clasping Osmond : " repeat the precious words, repeat them, my eternal friend ! you give me new life----my Juliette !---my wife ! my soul ! my treasure !"---

" Compose yourself, de Belville : all your family are living, and in good health."

De Belville measured by long and quick strides the apartment, ejaculating, " She lives!--she lives!--my Juliette lives !"

Osmond, concluding that a momentary respite might prove more efficacious than the most persuasive argument, kept profound silence.---De Belville continued ex-

claiming at short intervals, " My mother ! my wife ! my child, lives !---lives !---my mother---Julienne---Edward !--- beloved treasures of my soul ! they live---they live !"

At length Osmond made an effort to converse with the suffering Count---but in vain---he paced the room with trepidity, wholly enwrapped in himself. Osmond had recourse to another expedient ; he pretended to retire---" Whither do you go ?" exclaimed de Belville, catching his arm---" Tell me, where is my wife ?"

" Then be seated---be more calm---you shall know all. Are you not a man ; then like a man exert your fortitude, or I will tell you nothing further."

De Belville obeyed ; he sat down, opened his waistcoat, and wiped off the drops of cold-sweat that covered his forehead---" I can now hear you---pardon me, sir,---forgive my weakness."

Osmond

Osmond prevailed on him to take a large draught of wine, and then delicately informed him of the remaining particulars:---a few tears now came to his relief, and seemed to relax the tenseness of his aching heart-strings.--Young Evington, with great difficulty, prevented his instantly repairing to the cottage, and was obliged to make use of all the artillery of expostulation, to prove the impropriety of such a step.—During this contention, Osmond observed that de Belville frequently gazed upon the top of a snuff-box, which represented his wife's picture holding a nosegay, to which she is pointing, supposed to be singing the favourite air in the Opera of *Blaize et Babet*, "*C'est pour toi que je les arrange, cher Blaize, recois de Babet, &c. &c.*" *Douce tendre image !*" exclaimed the happy husband, and pressed it with fervour to his lips ; alternately looking at Osmond and then at the picture : at length, presenting the miniature to Osmond, he burst into

a flood of tears.—“ Gracious God !” he ejaculated, “ this is too much !”—Throwing his arms round young Evington’s neck, and for a few moments seemed unable to utter a syllable.—“ My friend ! my comforter ! you have restored me to life ! how shall I ever evince my gratitude ?—ah ! look at this dear face.”—Shewing him the picture.—“ See that sweet smile ! does she not seem to upbraid me with my delay in joining her ? Mr. Evington, she smiles on you---she entreats you to restore the husband, the father, the son of a hapless family---ah ! will you not comply ?”

“ For Heaven’s sake,” replied Osmond, greatly concerned at his uncommon agitation, “ be more calm—you will cause me to repent what I have done—entrust me with this valuable treasure ; I will not make a bad use of it : indeed, my friend, you will find your wife much altered. Prosperity and adversity make wonderful changes in the human form.”

“ I know

“ I know it does, my dear friend ; but they injure not the heart. Here, sir, take this picture---my Julianne’s---I entrust you with a *jewel* that once I swore never to part with for a moment until death, yet return it when you think proper :--- I owe you my life, therefore shall I not resign it to your care ? ”

Osmond acknowledged the confidence, and received the pledge without informing the Count of the use for which it was intended. At the same time he extorted a promise from him to tranquilize his spirits, to remain there until he returned, after which time he should be his own master.

Perhaps Osmond had never secretly felt a more satisfactory glow of heart than when, with hasty steps, he meditated on the purport of his mission to the ‘ *Fugitive Cot.* ’---The fluctuations of his mind were superabundant ; what at one instant offered as a happy means to disclose

eventful discovery, the next moment he rejected.—“Surely,” said Osmond, taking out the entrusted pledge, “there is no gratification more exquisite to the feelings than the power of soothing distress! Alas! here comfort is to be given, and much do I receive in bestowing it---will no one, can no one, administer comfort to *my* disease?---must I derive happiness only from seeing others happy? Sweet as the consolation may be, I am not philosopher enough to feel it as sufficient to supply the loss of Matilda!—dear lovely Matilda!—how would thy gentle bosom delight in participating the pleasure I am conveying to these unfortunate emigrants!—how often has this task, this gratification, been mutual in actions of less magnitude!”

The dusk of evening gathered fast round the whole atmosphere---the silver crescent rose in majestic splendour behind his father's noble mansion, which was
now

now almost rebuilt--here and there a solitary bird chirped its evening song, while others on the wing fought their wandering mates!--Osmond, ever a lover of the beauties of nature, surveyed the heavenly scene with admiration.

Arrived at Madame de Courcy's, he observed the cottage door open; he stopped a few minutes to attend to another no less interesting scene in the house--the little Edward's voice predominated, laughing heartily at his mother, who, to amuse her darling boy, was playing with him at marbles:---"No indeed, Edward," said the mother, "you play unfair---it is my turn." Edward, one knee on the ground, his little elbow rested on the other, his rosy dimpled chin on his little fat knuckles, archly replied:---"Well done, Mrs. Mama;---why you can't play at all, and yet that's my best *taw*!--ha! ha! ha!"

Osmond

Osmond now entered, apologizing for interrupting the game;—" It was indeed a pity," replied Edward, " but you are so good a gentleman I can't scold you: if you please, sir, I think I can beat *you* at a game at marbles, as well as I can my uncle and mama." Osmond good-naturedly assented to play, but unfortunate for Edward, the clock struck seven, and the maid summoned the little boy to rest. Edward complied with good humour, and, going up to his mother, added, " Never mind, sir; we'll have it another time, so good-night."—" Sweet boy!" exclaimed Osmond, catching him in his arms, " do you not think I can prevail on your dear mama to permit you to stay an hour longer?---You must not leave me."---" Can I," interrupted young Madame de Courcy, " refuse you any thing, sir?"---She dismissed the maid, and entered into conversation respecting Lady Beaufort; Osmond answered all her questions ambiguously: his mind was wholly engrossed

grossed by the subject on which he came. Edward remained on his knee, admiring his seals and watch-chain---“ I will shew you something prettier than these,” said Osmond, couching his body to shew the picture to the child, unobserved by the mother:---“ What do you think of this, Edward?”---“ That it is a very pretty lady.—Pray, sir,” continued the little fellow, “ is that the lady you most love in the whole world.” Edward blushed, recollecting that had his mother overheard him, she would have reprimanded his curiosity, which happened not to be the case, as Madame de Courcy was giving some necessary orders to Lisette, who then re-entered.

“ That lady,” replied Osmond, “ I much esteem ; but, as she is already the wife of another, I can only love her as a friend---do you know any body like her, Edward?”

“ Why I think she is very like mama
Julienne,

Julienne, when she has not her black gown on, and when she puts on her straw hat to walk abroad with me. Do you know, sir, yesterday was my birthday, and mama Julienne gave me just such another bunch of flowers as this lady has in her hand:—La! how like she is to mama—pray, sir, do you know her husband?”

Madame de Courcy, overhearing the last question, desired Edward not to be inquisitive, requesting young Evington to send him away if he was troublesome. “I will kiss her,” cried Edward, “because she is so like mama Julienne; bless me! I wish it was mine, I would fill it with *bonbons*. I wonder if you will let me have it to keep, because ’tis like mama?”

“Would you like to see that lady’s husband, who I assure you resembles your papa exceedingly?—Indeed, Edward, you have every feature of that lady’s husband.” Julienne coloured and turned pale,

pale, yet, believing Osmond only trifling with her son, remained silent.

“ Suppose I give you to your father.”

“ I’m man enough to know that is impossible, sir, because poor papa is dead ; and that’s why mama wears these black clothes, and she says she will never wear any other until the day I’m big enough to be married---but do let me see if the gentleman is like him, because I have seen *Pa’s* picture.”

Julienne’s attention was now entirely on that side of the room. The pencil fell from her hand---the tear of retrospection bedewed the unfinished landscape :---“ Ah ! Mr. Evington ! have pity on my weakness---I am not more than feeble woman---your words very much affect me.”

“ Here, mama,” said Edward, snatching the snuff-box from Osmond---“ see how like this lady is to you !”---Surprise and agitation took possession of her whole frame. She had not words to enquire
even

even what she wished, yet trembled to learn.-----“ *Juste Ciel!*” exclaimed she, “ may I believe my eyes?---Oh! Mr. Evington, I implore you to acquaint me how you came by this miniature?—alas! you know it is mine—tell me—tell me, I conjure you!”

“ I must premise so many injunctions, madam; I must exact so many promises, that without you will acquiesce in them all, I shall be unable to execute your wishes.”

“ Ask---say---do any thing---my assent is given :---Good God! do I behold this, and not my husband!—Oh! sir, relieve my suspense.”

Osmond, having now prepared his explanation, fully satisfied the astonished Julianne, who summoned all her fortitude. She heard the recital comparatively with composure, save by incessant changes in her countenance. The chief demonstrations she gave of feeling until he finished speaking (one arm round the no
less

less astonished Edward) consisted in kissing the boy's cheek with repeated energy—

“Oh! my beloved boy! how shall we ever testify our gratitude to Mr. Evington?—he restores *your father!*” Edward flew to Osmond, and threw himself at his feet—

“Dear, dear, sir!” said the sweet boy, “oh! how good you are!—after papa, and mama, and grandmama, I love you better than all the world; and to convince you, I will give you this gold piece that papa gave me for being good a long time ago.”

“Lovely boy! we will exchange, and you shall take my watch and seals for being so again.” Edward looked at his mother for approbation, and accepted the gift.

Madame de Courcy wished to impart the intelligence to her mother, previous to joining her husband.—“Meanwhile,” said Osmond, “I will lead this little hero to his father.”—“No, no! I cannot let him go without me—my husband! shall I not fly to you?—Oh! my friend, detain

me

me no longer—he sinks under the expectation of enfolding his Julianne in his arms—how shall I act? direct me, you are my earthly saviour—let me see him first and then acquaint my mother.”

“ Pardon me ; should your mother learn the circumstance from any other person in your absence, the surprize may be more than she can bear ; and if, madam, you determine to see the Count de Belville to-night, I think we had better let Edward accompany us.”

“ True, sir : have the goodness to remain here with my darling boy, I will rejoin you as soon as possible. Ah ! assure me,” she continued, taking Osmond’s hand, “ you will not depart.”

Edward forgot not the promised game at marbles ; too young to indulge in reflection on the past, or to dwell on the astonishing revolutions of the present, he exultingly brought them forth and highly enjoyed the advantage he gained over Osmond.

Old Madame de Courcy heard not the relation with as much fortitude as her daughter, being indisposed and far advanced in years. She fainted: on her recovery she requested Julianne to go to her husband immediately—"Tell him, tell my dear George, my beloved son, that his poor old mother cannot go to him, but if he does not speedily come to me, I shall pass the night in misery. Oh! blessed, blessed Mr. Evington!—may that gracious Heaven, that all-merciful God, reward your excellent merits!—Guard him, *Dieu tout puissant!* from all evil! bless him with a wife like Julianne, with a son like George, with a grandson like my Edward!"—She sunk on the bed, her voice failed—"Go, dearest Julianne," said she, recovering her voice, "go, my sweet child; the good Lisette will take care of me until your return."

Lisette having understood from Osmond the whole affair, half distracted with unexpected joy, jumped about, kissed the
little

little boy, kissed Osmond's hands, and called him the "flower of the English nation!"—A summons to attend the old lady's chamber relieved Osmond from her extravagant rapture:—"La, ma'am," cried the loquacious maid, "who'd have thought it! well, for my part, what a dear, sweet, beautiful man is Mr. Evington! I say, ma'am, only think—*ma foi!* I'm almost out of my wits!—bless me, ma'am, how you shake!—*Bon Dieu!* what's the matter?"

"This unforeseen shock will be too much for me—I fear I shall not live to see my son:—read me a prayer, Lisette; it will compose my mind---my sight is very bad.—Where are you child?—Hark! hark! did I not hear him? Oh! yes, 'tis his voice!--ah me!"

"No, ma'am; indeed 'tis not him---don't be in such a flurry, pray don't---you'll make yourself quite ill. Madame Julienne and Edward are just gone to him, and to be sure they must stay a little while; so pray, good madam, be easy,
and

and I'll pray for your health at the bedside."

" Good Lifette, you are a worthy girl: come read, child." Lifette obeyed.

Julienne, Osmond, and Edward had, by this time, nearly attained Lady Beaufort's mansion, where Osmond remained while in Devonshire. Madame de Courcy's limbs could scarcely support her, even with the friendly assistance of Osmond's arm:—" Indeed, my dear sir," said she, " my heart is overpowered with gladness—allow me to rest a while ; I feel yet unable to support this interview."

" Courage, madam, the probation you have experienced will henceforward render life the sweeter ; we cannot truly estimate prosperity till we are tutored in the school of adversity."

" Pray, sir, make haste," interrupted Edward, " for I long to be with dear papa—aye, I'm sure that is the house ;—in we go—Papa, papa, papa !—where is he?—up stairs?"

They

They entered the hall; Osmond left young Madame de Courcy (the now Countess de Belville), to fetch a glass of wine, observing her extreme agitation. The report of a gun at the same instant from above stairs struck them with mutual horror—" Oh heavens !" cried Julianne, almost convulsed by terror, and fainted on the marble stairs. Edward screamed and threw himself by her, crying:—" Mama is dead!—dead!—mama is dead!" Osmond, terrified, knew not which way to turn first—the lifeless Julianne demanded all his attention, yet he knew the assistance of female domestics would be more serviceable than his own. The dismayed attendants ran to and fro in wonder and precipitation; some declaring he had shot himself!—" Ah ! poor gentleman, I thought as much !"—" He is dead !" said another.—Others ran for a surgeon, exclaiming—" How unfortunate !"—while every endeavour was used to restore the Countess.

END OF VOL. III.



